

THE

Gal 10. F. B.
1113. a. 17.

WORKS

Of the MOST REVEREND

Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,

LATE

Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in *Ireland*.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

Printed for THOMAS TRYE, near *Gray's-Inn-Gate* in *Holbourn*, MDCCXLIV.

N. B. All the *Author's Pieces* may be had *separate*, with *great Allowance* to such well-disposed Persons as buy Numbers of each to give away.

5





C O N T E N T S

O F T H E

S E C O N D V O L U M E,

- I. **A** Gentleman's Religion in three Parts: The first contains the Principles of Natural Religion; the second and third the Doctrines of Christianity, both as to Faith and Practice. With an Appendix, wherein it is proved, that nothing contrary to our Reason can possibly be the Object of our Belief; but that it is no just Exception against some of the Doctrines of Christianity, that they are above our Reason.
- II. An Essay towards making the Knowledge of Religion easy to the meanest Capacity: Being a short and plain Account of the Doctrines and Rules of Christianity.
- III. A plain and easy Method whereby a Man of moderate Capacity may arrive at full Satisfaction in all Things that concern his everlasting Salvation: To which is added a Paraphrase on St. *Athanasius's* Creed.
- IV. The Rule of Self-Examination, or the only Way of banishing Doubts and Scruples, and directing the Conscience in the satisfactory Practice of all Christian Duties.
- V. The true Nature of an Oath; a Letter to a sober *Quaker* concerning his solemn Affirmation.



CONTENTS

OF THE

SECOND VOLUME

- I. A General View of the Christian Religion in three Parts: The first, containing the Principles of Natural Religion; the second, the Principles of Christian Religion; and the third, the Principles of Christian Ethics. With an Appendix, wherein is inserted, first, a Dissertation on the Nature and Extent of the Christian Religion; and secondly, a Dissertation on the Nature and Extent of the Christian Ethics.
- II. A Dissertation on the Nature and Extent of the Christian Religion, as it relates to the Principles of Natural Religion, and to the Principles of Christian Religion.
- III. A Dissertation on the Nature and Extent of the Christian Ethics, as it relates to the Principles of Natural Religion, and to the Principles of Christian Religion.
- IV. The Rule of Self-Examination, or the only Way of knowing Devils and Scorpions, and distinguishing the Conference in the Christian Practice of all Christian Ethics.
- V. The Nature of an Oath: a Dissertation on the Nature and Extent of the Christian Ethics.

1

A
**GENTLEMAN'S
RELIGION:**

IN THREE PARTS.

The FIRST contains the
Principles of Natural Religion;

The SECOND and THIRD, the
Doctrines of Christianity,

Both as to

FAITH and PRACTICE.

WITH

An *APPENDIX,*

Wherein it is proved,

That nothing *contrary* to our *Reason*
can possibly be the *Object* of our *Belief*:
But that it is no *just Exception* against
some of the *Doctrines of Christianity*,
that they are *above* our *Reason*.

THE SEVENTH EDITION.

L O N D O N,

Printed for THOMAS TRYB near *Gray's-Inn-Gate* in
Holbourn. MDCCLII.

GEORGE L. EMMANUEL'S RELIGION:

IN THREE PARTS.

The First containing

Principles of Natural Religion;

The Second and Third the

Doctrines of Christianity.

With

FAITH AND PRACTICE.

WITH

AN APPENDIX.

By GEORGE L. EMMANUEL.

There nothing coming to our Reader
can possibly be the Object of our Study:
But that it is no less necessary to
some of the Doctrines of Christianity,
that they are above our Reason.

The Seventh Edition.

L O N D O N.

Printed for Thomas Tegg near Covent Garden
in Pall Mall.

A SHORT
P R E F A C E

To the W H O L E.

Some Men slight Religion, whilst others corrupt and perplex it with things either false or unnecessary; the latter of which I look upon to be much the Cause of the former.

Many will not take the Pains to read much; and many do not thoroughly consider, nor well digest, what they read; which renders their Notions confus'd, and themselves uncertain what to conclude.

I have therefore endeavour'd to make such a short and easy Draught

The PREFACE.

of Christianity, and the Grounds of it; as every Man of a moderate Capacity, may read without Tediouſneſs, and underſtand without Difficulty; and which, if it does not wholly ſatisfy him, may yet ſerve to put his Thoughts into a Method, and himſelf upon ſeeking for further Satisfaction.

The firſt Part of this ſmall Work I put forth ſome Time ſince; and, finding that it has not proved altogether unacceptable to Men of Judgment and Moderation, I have been encouraged to finiſh and publiſh the Second and Third Parts alſo.

My Deſign is certainly good; and if I have not well perform'd what I have undertaken, I hope, at leaſt, that what I have here done, may move ſome more able and judicious Perſon to take the Work in Hand, and ſupply thoſe Defects of which I have been guilty.

A GEN-



A
GENTLEMAN'S
RELIGION:

WITH THE
GROUNDS and REASONS of it.

P A R T. I.

IN WHICH

The Truth of Christianity in general is vindicated; its Simplicity asserted; and some Introductory Rules, for the discovering of its particular Doctrines and Precepts, are propos'd.



THE HISTORY OF THE

REPUBLIC OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FROM 1776 TO 1876

BY JAMES M. SMITH

NEW YORK: PUBLISHED BY

THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1876

PRINTED BY THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1876

THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1876

A
GENTLEMAN'S Religion.
WITH THE
Grounds and Reasons of it.

PART I.

I. **S**INCE almost all Men (however different in other Opinions and Interests) have ever agreed in this, That there is a God to whose Power all Things are subject; that the true Service and Worship of God (which is call'd Religion) shall be rewarded with future Happiness; and, that the Neglect and Contempt of Religion shall be punish'd with future Misery; every Man surely has Reason to believe

A 4

lieve thus much at least, That what is so generally and firmly believ'd may be possibly, nay, and is probably, a Truth. And wheresoever there is a Possibility, and much more where there is a Probability, of a great Good on the one hand, and a great Evil on the other; there certainly every Man is concern'd to enquire into the Reality of the Thing; that he may not miss of the one, if it be attainable, nor fall into the other, if it be avoidable. I conclude therefore, *That it is a very great Folly for any Man to give over searching after the true Religion, until he has found it; except he were able to demonstrate, either, that there is no God; or else, that there is no Worship or Service due to him.*

II. In all Matters of great and serious Consequence, no Man that is wise will act by chance and at random, without being able to give some Reason for what he does. For he that does any thing, and knows not why,

why, is more likely to do himself Hurt than Good; because there are more Ways to the former than to the latter. Since therefore Religion is a thing of the greatest Moment and Importance that can be, I conclude, That *no Man ought to chuse his Religion blindly, and by chance; but that every Man ought to have some Reason for what he professes. Whatever Religion, therefore, a Man is bred up in from his Youth, it certainly is very fit for him, when he comes to Years of discretion, to enquire into the Grounds and Reasons of it. For otherwise it is not possible for him to know whether he be in the Right or the Wrong, in the Way to Heaven or Hell.*

III. If there be a God, and if he requires any Service or Worship (*i. e.* any Religion) from us, it is undoubtedly for this End, That it may be a Trial of our Faithfulness and Obedience to him. Now, whosoever has a Mind to prove his Servant, whether

he will be faithful and obedient, he will not give him such dark and intricate Commands as shall puzzle him to find out the Meaning of them; (for, how can a Servant approve himself faithful and obedient, if he be uncertain what it is that his Master requires from him?) but he will surely give him such Commands and Directions as are easy enough to be understood, however difficult they may be to be enterpriz'd, or accomplish'd. I conclude, therefore, That *all the Duties of Religion, which God requires of any Man, must needs be easy enough for him to understand, however hard they may be to be practis'd.* For otherwise, Religion would be a Tryal rather of a Man's Wit and Cunning than of his Faithfulness and Obedience. And therefore also I cannot but conclude, That *most, if not all the Controversies about Religion, which at this Day distract the World, do not proceed from any Difficulty in or about the Determination of all Things*

Things necessary in Religion it self; but partly from the Pride of some Learned Men, who have lov'd to start new and difficult Questions, and to impose their private Sentiments upon the World, that they might be admir'd for their Wit and Subtilty; partly from the Covetousness and Ambition of some, whether Learned or Unlearned, who have found that their Worldly Interest will be better serv'd by some Doctrines (no Matter how false and precarious) than by others; and partly from the Prejudice of most Men, who are apt with great Zeal and Eagerness, to contend for all those Things which, from their Childhood, they have been taught to have a Reverence for. And I further conclude, That whosoever has a sincere Desire to embrace true Religion, must lay aside Pride, Ambition, Covetousness, and Prejudice, which would misguide him; and follow his sober and impartial Reason, which will ever lead him in the right Way.

IV. There are different Sorts, or rather Degrees of Assurance, which Men have concerning Things. Some Things are evident of themselves, without any Proof; some Things we are assur'd of by the Testimony of our Senses; some Things we receive as Truths, because we find them to follow from other Truths already receiv'd; and some Things we believe only upon the Testimony of others. Moreover, some Things we are persuaded of, without any Doubt or Diffidence; whereas other Things do seem, at best, to be but likely or probable, and that too in a different Degree, according as their Evidence is stronger or weaker. Now every sober Man, where he has certain Evidence of a Thing, there he acts with Assurance; where the Matter is but probable, there he proceeds with Caution; but where a Man is under a Necessity of doing one way or other, and where the Matter appears doubtful on both sides, there it becomes

him to weigh the Reasons on both Parts with due Consideration; and according as he finds the greater Probability to be on the one Hand, rather than the other, so to square his Actions accordingly. Since therefore every Man must necessarily either live religiously, or not live religiously, I conclude, *That if upon a serious Consideration of the Matter, there appear to be more probable Reasons and Arguments for Religion than against it, every wise and sober Man must embrace Religion.* This I say, not but that I think there are even demonstrative Arguments for Religion, and not so much as one probable one against it: But because that which to me seems demonstrative, to another may appear but probable, I thought it fit to note, that every Man, in point of common Prudence, is oblig'd to follow Religion, if it does but appear more likely and probable to him than Irreligion.

V. Whether it is possible for any Agent to produce a new Being purely out of nothing, may, with much shew of Reason be doubted: As also, Whether mere Matter alone, without any other Agent or efficient Cause, can ever be able to work itself into any different Species or Forms. But this appears as certain as any Thing can be, that where there is neither any Agent or efficient Cause to work, nor any Matter or Subject to be wrought upon, there it is utterly impossible for any thing ever to be produc'd into Being. Since therefore I find that there are many Things which actually have a Being and Existence, I conclude, That *of absolute Necessity there must be something or other which has been from all Eternity, and never had a Beginning.* For otherwise, if we suppose that ever there was a Time when nothing at all did exist, it follows, from what has been said, that it would be utterly impossible that any Thing ever should be produc'd into Existence.

VI.

VI. Since of necessity we must acknowledge something to have been eternal, I cannot but conclude, That *the Eternity of such a Being as God is describ'd to be, is much more probable and fit to be believ'd than the Eternity of such a Being as I see this World to be.* For when I go about to conceive a Notion of the Eternity of the World (I mean in the like Posture that now it is in) there do occur to my Mind such Difficulties, or rather Impossibilities, as I think no Man can digest. For he that affirms the World, as now it stands, to have been eternal, must of Necessity grant, That there has been an eternal Succession of Men, Beasts and Vegetables, and that to a Number actually infinite: For if the Number be not infinite, how can the Succession have been eternal? And yet a Number actually infinite, to me appears to be a plain Contradiction: For that which is infinite cannot be made bigger, whereas there is no Number but may be made bigger
by

by the Addition of Units. Again, if any one shall affirm, that an infinite Number is no Contradiction, and that there has been a Succession of such a Number of Beings in the World; then thus I argue, that if there has been a Succession of an infinite Number of Men, Beasts, &c. then, by a Parity of Reason, there has been also a Succession of an infinite Number of Days and Nights; and if so, then likewise of an infinite Number of Years too; (for if the Number of Years can be limited, so can that of Days too, since every Year contains just such a certain Number of Days.) Now this, I suppose, must be granted me. That infinite Numbers are equal, (for if one Number be less than another, how can it be infinite?) And if so, then it must follow, that in the Eternity of the World the Number of Years is equal to the Number of Days, which is absurd; because every Year contains in its self a Number of 365 Days.

These

These Difficulties or rather Impossibilities, I say, do make the Notion of the World's Eternity, (I mean as the World now is) to appear to me as an absurd and unreasonable Supposition. But then as to God; altho' I confess it to be difficult, and perhaps impossible, for Man to comprehend the Manner how he is, or can be, eternal without Beginning; yet since the Thing itself is so uncontrollably evident that something is so eternal, (tho' the Manner how, is to me incomprehensible) I find no other Scruple or Difficulty in admitting the Eternity of God. For tho' it seems contrary to all Reason, to affirm an eternal Succession of divers Things one after another, without a Beginning; yet I can find no Manner of Repugnancy in maintaining, That there is one immutable Being (*i. e.* God) which never began to be.

VII. Whether the Matter, of which this visible World is fram'd, has existed from all Eternity; or whether
it

it were produc'd out of nothing by the Almighty Power of God, is a Question which Reason alone, I think, can never determine. But when I contemplate and consider the great Variety, Order, Beauty, and Usefulness, which do evidently appear in all the Parts of the World, as they are plac'd together, and answer one another; I cannot but conclude, That *the whole World and all its Parts, are contriv'd, fram'd, and fashion'd, by a wise and powerful Being, whom we call God.* As when I see a curious Clock or Engine, I presently conclude, that it was made and contriv'd by some Artist; and should laugh at that Man who would offer to say, that it was form'd and fashion'd only by Chance.

VIII. That Miracles (*i. e.* wonderful Works, surpassing the ordinary course of Nature and Power of Art) have been wrought for confirmation of the Truth of Religion, is a Thing that I shall take for granted at present, because

cause it will appear to be prov'd beyond any just Exception in the Sequel of this Discourse: And from thence, I think, I may most reasonably conclude, That *there is a Being superior to Nature, who can command and controul it as he pleases, i. e. in other Terms, That there is a God.*

IX. The Histories of all Ages, and Travellers into all Countries, do universally concur in this Testimony, That there is no Nation or People, whether learned or unlearned, but what do own the Being of a God. And those few Persons, who have presum'd to deny it, have ever been look'd on as Prodigies and Monsters of Mankind. Furthermore, even those few who have deny'd the Being of a God, have ever been Men of such debauch'd and profligate Lives, that we have great Reason to believe, that they first have wish'd that there might be no God to punish them; and then, without any other Ground or Reason, have believ'd, or rather pre-

pretended to believe, what they have wish'd. For it is almost ever observ'd, that when debauch'd and atheistical Persons do draw near to Death, they do either renounce their Atheism, own the Being of a God, and make Supplication to him; or, at least, have their Minds possess'd with such Doubts and Fears, as plainly shew that they have still a strong Suspicion that there likely may be a God, for ought they know, who will call them to an Account for all their Wickedness. Since then all Sorts of Men, both learned and unlearned, and all Nations of Men, both civil and barbarous, have always own'd the Being of a God; since his Being has never been deny'd but by very few indeed; since that Denial has rather proceeded from their Wishes and Desires, than from their Reason and Understanding; and lastly, since they have not been able wholly to extinguish the Belief of a God out of their Minds, altho' they have earnestly endeavour'd

deavour'd it; I conclude, That *the Belief of a God in Man, is neither the Effect of Chance*, because 'tis universal; *nor of Ignorance*, because it possesses the most Learned; *nor of State-Policy*, because 'tis receiv'd among the most barbarous and unciviliz'd People; but that *there is a God, who has made all Men, and has (as a Token of his Work) stamp'd and engrav'd this his Mark and Character upon them.*

X. There is no Man of common Sense, who builds a convenient and goodly Structure, but he takes Care likewise to keep it in good Order and Repair after it is built. And there is no Fabrick but, in Track of Time, will visibly decay, if constant Care be not taken of it. Since therefore God has erected and framed this goodly Structure of the World; and since in so long a Time there is no Manner of Decay to be found in it (as is abundantly prov'd by *Hakerwill*, in his Apology on this Subject) I conclude,
That

That God, *not only made this World by his Power, but also governs it by his Providence.* And for the only Objection, which seems to be of any Force against God's Providence, namely, That wicked Men do often thrive and prosper, whilst good and virtuous Men are oppress'd with Misery; it is most easily and naturally solv'd, by supposing (what shall anon be prov'd) That there are abundant Rewards for good Men, and sufficient Punishments for the Wicked, to be distributed in a Life which is to come; which will bring all Things to be equal at the last.

XI. Every Parent who begets and brings up a Child; every Master, who feeds and pays a Servant: every Prince, who governs and protects his Subjects; and every Benefactor, who does any Act of Kindness for another, may very reasonably, and do always, expect a Return of Love, Obedience, and Gratitude in due Proportion to the Benefits receiv'd from them. Since

then God is more than a Parent to us, for he made us and our Parents too; since he is so kind a Master, who gives us our Food, and all the Conveniencies of Life; since he governs and protects us by his over-ruling Providence more effectually than any earthly Prince does his Subjects; and lastly, since he is our greatest and supreme Benefactor, who has given us all the Good which we possess and enjoy; I cannot but conclude, That *he expects a Return of Love, Obedience, and Gratitude from us*, (I will not say proportionable to the Benefits receiv'd from him, for that, perhaps, may exceed our Ability; but) *proportionable unto our Ability and Capacity.*

XII. That God is wise and powerful I gather from his Work, which I contemplate in the visible World. And from thence I conclude, That *he will sufficiently punish those Persons who despise him, so far as not to love, thank, and obey him, according*

ing as he expects and requires from them. That he is also good and gracious, I gather from those Good Things which he has bestow'd upon us, relating both to our Bodies and Minds. And from thence I conclude, That *he will abundantly reward all those Persons who take care to pay him that Love, Gratitude, and Obedience which he expects.*

XIII. That these Rewards and Punishments are not finally distributed in this Life is very evident; because we often see Men that are notoriously wicked, enjoy all the Pleasures; and others that are conspicuously virtuous, undergo almost all the Calamities of this World, even unto their very Graves. I conclude therefore, That *there is another Life after this in which these Rewards and Punishments shall be duly distributed.*

XIV. When a Man is once convinc'd that there is a God, to whom there is a Service due; and that there are Rewards and Punishments to be distri-

dispens'd to all Men, according as they have perform'd or neglected that Service; the grand Enquiry that every Man is concern'd to make, is, What he must do to avoid these Punishments, and to be made Partaker of these Rewards. And here, I think, I may most easily and naturally make these following Conclusions, viz.

1. *He who does what God requires from him, shall not be punish'd but rewarded.* 2. *God requires from every Man that he should use his honest Endeavour by all means, to know and understand his Will as perfectly as he can.* For this is but Reason for every Master to expect from his Servant; much more for such a Master as God. 3. *If a Man does his heartiest and best Endeavour, first to know, and then to perform, the Will of God; God will require no more from him.* For to me it seems utterly inconsistent with the Wisdom of God to expect, and with his Goodness to require, any more from a Man than what he

is able to perform; *i. e.* any more than his best and most hearty Endeavours.

XV. There are, in the general, but two ways of finding out and knowing the Will of God: The one is by the Use of our natural Reason and Understanding: The other is by attending to that Revelation which God has made of his Will to the World. Here then, I conclude, *I must make it my Business, first, to enquire into the Truth and Reality of this Revelation; and then, to make use of that, and my Reason together, in order to find out what is God's Will.*

XVI. That there was such a Person as *Jesus of Nazareth*, in *Galilee*, in the time of *Tiberius Cæsar*, the Roman Emperor; That he had a Company of poor men for his Disciples; That he and his Disciples went about the Country of *Judea*, Teaching and Preaching; That he was put to Death upon the Cross, after the Roman manner, under *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman Governour of *Judea*;

That after his Death, his Disciples went about into all, or most Parts of the then known World, Teaching and Preaching that this *Jesus* was the *Christ*, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World, and that he was risen from the Dead, and gone into Heaven; That in a few Years they converted a very great Number of People, in all Places, to this Belief; That the Professors of this Belief were call'd Christians; That they were most cruelly persecuted, and many Thousands of them put to Death, and that with most exquisite Torments, for no other Reason, but because they were Christians; That these Persecutions were several Times renewed against them, for the Space of about Three hundred Years; and yet, for all this, that the Number of Christians daily encreas'd, and that not only Ideots and unlearned Men, but great Scholars and Philosophers, were converted to Christianity, even in the Times of Persecution; All this, being

B 2

ing

ing merely Matter of Fact, was never yet deny'd by the greatest Enemies of the Christian Religion. And, indeed, these things are so abundantly testify'd by the Histories, and other Writings of those Times; and have been so generally receiv'd for Truth; as well by the Opposers as Believers of Christianity, by a constant, universal, and uninterrupted Tradition, from those Days even unto this Time; that a Man may as well deny the Truth of any, or of all the Histories of the World, as of this. Now, since all Men generally have a strong Inclination to retain and stick to that Religion (whatever it be) in which both they and their Fathers have been brought up, and no less an Aversion to all causeless Innovations in Matters of Religion: Moreover, since all Men without exception, who are in their Wits, have naturally a most earnest desire to preserve their Lives as long as they can, and to keep themselves free from Pain and Trouble; I think
I may

I may reasonably conclude, That *there must have been some extraordinary strong, and even irresistible Motive, which could prevail upon such Multitudes of People to forsake theirs and their Ancestors old Religion, and to embrace Christianity*, which then had but newly appear'd in the World, and which in those Days, did seldom fail to involve its Profelytes in most grievous Troubles and Persecutions.

XVII. That this Motive could not be the Hopes of any Profit or Advantage in this Life, is most evident; because Christianity was, in those Days most commonly persecuted, even unto Death. It must therefore of necessity, be the Hopes of some Benefit or Happiness which should accrue to them after this Life was at an end. And this Benefit or Happiness could not seem small and inconsiderable to them; nor could the Hope which they conceiv'd of it be weak, or doubtful: For there is scarce any Man, or ever was, in the World,

who would run himself into certain Misery and Persecution, even to the losing of his Life, only upon a *weak and doubtful* Hope of some *small and inconsiderable* Benefit or Happiness to be enjoy'd in a Life to come. I conclude therefore, That *the Primitive Christians were undoubtedly possess'd with a strong Belief, and most firm Persuasion, That whosoever should truly embrace, profess and live according to the Christian Religion in this Life, was certainly to be made Partaker of some great and inestimable Happiness in the Life to come.*

XVIII. That this Belief and Persuasion did not proceed from any Frenzy or Madness; (which sometimes possesses Men with very strong Imaginations) is very evident; both because there was such a multitude of them, who exactly agreed in the same Sentiments; and also, because it appears, both from the Writings and Actions of the Primitive Christians, that they were Men of Reason

son and Sobriety, and some of them Persons of great Learning. As evident also it is, that it could not proceed from the Force of any Argument drawn from the Principles of bare natural Reason, without Revelation. For what Man in his Wits, without pretending some Revelation from Heaven, could ever be persuaded, that the embracing of the Religion taught by such a particular Person, more than another, would make him happy in the Life to come? I conclude therefore, That *the Disciples of Jesus, who preach'd Christianity abroad in the World, did convince and satisfy their Profelytes, that it was reveal'd by God from Heaven, that whosoever would believe on Jesus, and receive, and live according to his Religion, should be made very happy in the next Life.*

XIX. The main Argument which the first Preachers of Christianity made use of to convince the World that this was a divine Revelation,

was this, *viz.* Because that *Jesus* in his Life-time, did perform such and so many Miracles, and wonderful Works as sufficiently shew'd, that he had his Commission and Power from God; and because his Disciples (whom he had appointed to teach his Religion to the World) for many Years after his Death, did likewise continue to work many Miracles in the Name of *Jesus*; which shew'd that God was with them in what they did and taught. The things by them alledg'd to have been perform'd by *Jesus* were such as these; That he heal'd all manner of Diseases and Distempers with a Touch, or barely with a Word speaking; That he gave Sight to the Blind, Hearing to the Deaf, Speech to the Dumb, and Strength and Agility to the Lame and Maimed; That he rais'd several Persons from the Dead; and that he himself arose from the Dead after he had been Crucify'd, and a Spear thrust into his Vitals, and had lain dead

dead in a Sepulchre unto the Third Day; And lastly, That, after his Resurrection having several times appear'd to his Disciples, and convers'd with them, for the space of Forty Days, he was, at last, openly, and in their Sight taken up alive into Heaven. The things alledged to have been done by his Disciples, were, The healing the Sick, the Lame, the Maimed, &c. and, in a particular manner, their Speaking all Languages, altho' they never had learn'd them. That all these things were pretended by the first Preachers of Christianity, is confess'd on all Hands. And, undoubtedly, they must needs, at least, *pretend* something that was very extraordinary, or else they never could have converted such vast Multitudes, under so many Disadvantages as they and their Religion labour'd. That these things were not only pretended, but really and actually perform'd, is, to my Opinion, uncontrollably evinced from the Testimony

B 5

mony of the Disciples themselves who declar'd these things for Truth unto the World; who could not themselves be deceiv'd in those Matters of Fact, of which they pretended to have been Eye-Witnesses; who never would go about to impose a Lye upon the World, by which they could propose to themselves no manner of Advantage in this Life, nor (if it were a Lye) in the Life to come; who never would have expos'd themselves to Poverty, to Racks, to Gibbets, to Fire and Faggot, in a word, to all sorts of Torments and Deaths, only for the sake of a fruitless and unprofitable Fable; who being Men of unblamable Lives, for their Morality, had, doubtless, more Honesty and Integrity, than to affirm those things for certain Truths, which they must needs know to be mere Inventions; who were too many in Number, and too void of Craft and Guile to combine together in framing a false Story, and none of them ever to be-
tray

tray or discover the Cheat; who could never hope to impose the Belief of such a Story upon a curious and inquisitive Age (such as that was wherein they liv'd) if it had been false; and therefore would certainly never have attempted it, if they had not known it to have been true; And, lastly, who, instead of convincing such Multitudes as they did, must needs have been palpably discovered, and expos'd to the World for a Company of lewd Cheats and Impostors, in pretending that such and such things were done in the Land of *Judea* and *Jerusalem* (and done openly too, in the Face of the World,) when it was so easy a matter to go or send to the Place, to make Enquiry, and so to find out the Cheat, if a Cheat it had been. But that these same Miracles and wonderful Works did far surpass both the Course of Nature, and the Power of Art, is very evident; That they were not perform'd by the Assistance of any wicked Spirit, does

sufficiently appear; because the very Intent and Design of them was to propagate a Doctrine in the World, which, by all, must be allow'd to teach the purest and most strict Morality; to which it cannot be imagin'd, that any Impure and Evil Spirit would contribute any Help. It remains therefore that these things must needs have been perform'd, either by the immediate Power and Assistance of God, (who is both the Framers and Controller of Nature) or (which is the same thing in effect) by the Mediation and Ministry of good Spirits, who always act obediently to his Will. So that (whether mediately or immediately) it is God who is to be look'd upon as the Original and Author of all those wonderful Things, which were done by *Jesus* and his Disciples. Now then, since God did interpose his Power to work such strange and stupendous Things, for the Propagation and Confirmation of that Doctrine which

which was taught by *Jesus* and his Disciples; this, I think, is a sufficient Demonstration, that their Doctrine was certainly true. For, Who can imagine that God should make use of his extraordinary Power, only to cheat and deceive the World into the Belief of a Lye? I conclude therefore, That *the Primitive Christians had sufficient Reason to believe, that it was reveal'd by God from Heaven, that whosoever would believe on Jesus, and receive, and live according to his Religion, should be made very happy in the next Life;* this very thing being the grand Point of Doctrine, which *Jesus* and his Disciples taught and preach'd to the World. And if we are sure that the Primitive Christians had Reason sufficient to believe this, from hence it follows, That *we have sufficient Reason to believe it also.*

XX. But *Jesus* himself being long since ascended into Heaven, and his Disciples who first preached the Gospel

pel. departed out of the World; here *I think, it is necessary to enquire, to whom, or to what, I must apply my self, that* (amidst the several Parties in the World, who all call themselves true and orthodox Christians, each condemning all others but themselves) *I may be truly and surely inform'd what is the true and genuine Religion or Doctrine of Jesus which I ought to receive, and live according to, in order to my future Happiness,* For, if I do not this, I must either reject the Doctrine of *Jesus*, and so lose my future Happiness; or else take it altogether upon Trust, and by Chance, and then it's odds but I light upon the wrong, and must needs run a very great hazard. And tho' he who is in a Mistake, and cannot tell how to help it, will, doubtless, find an easy Pardon from God; yet he who falls into Error, for want of moderate Care and Diligence to find out the Truth, has, I think, no pretence either to Pardon, or so much as to Pity.

XXI. The

XXI. The *Roman Catholicks* do tell me, that I must apply my self to the Church. This Church they define to be, that Society of Persons who profess Faith in *Jesus Christ*, and live in Subjection to, and Communion with, the Pope, or Bishop of *Rome*. This Church, they say, is infallible; and not only does not, but cannot err in any Doctrine of Religion. Go then, say they, to this Church, and receive the Doctrine which she teaches; and there you have certainly and infallibly, the true and pure Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*. But I cannot give my Assent to follow this their Direction, because I find such great Difficulties in my way as I think are insuperable; at least, I am sure, such as I am not able to overcome. For, *First*, Altho' it may be a certain Truth, that there shall always be a Church, that is to say, a Company of People, somewhere or other, professing the true Christian Religion, as long as the World shall last;

last; yet what solid Proof can be brought, that this particular Society of Men, who live in Communion with the Pope, or Bishop of *Rome*, are alone the true Church, and shall always keep and maintain, amongst them, the true and uncorrupt Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*? This Matter being a Question of Revelation, and positive Institution, is incapable of being prov'd by any Argument drawn from Natural Reason. And, as for the Texts of Scripture which they alledge, it is even ridiculous to think, that any sober and unprejudiced Person should be convinc'd by them; (as will evidently appear to any one who impartially reads what the *Romish* and Protestant Divines have written on this Controversy:) For there are none of those Texts, but are fairly and naturally capable of another Interpretation; and must be very much strain'd and wrested to make them countenance the *Romish* Doctrine. Besides that, the Divines of the
Church

Church of *Rome* do generally teach, That no Man can be sure of the Authority or Sense of any Texts of Scripture, (especially if it appear to be any way doubtful) except he receives the Proposal and Interpretation thereof from this their Church, which they say is infallible. So that a Man must of necessity believe the Infallibility of their Church, before he can any way be sure of the Credit, or even of the Sense, of those Texts of Scripture which they bring to prove it. And then, what need is there of Scripture-Arguments, to prove a thing which must be acknowledg'd before the Arguments can have any force, or even be as much as certainly understood; and if they tell me, That the Fathers and ancient Christian Writers do testify thus much of the Church of *Rome*; I can only say, that the Protestant Divines (who seem to me to be Men of as much Learning and Integrity as the *Romish*) do declare that it is far otherwise. Nor
have

have I Skill enough in Language and Antiquity, to take upon me to judge of this Dispute. Neither do I understand, by what Authority the Writings of those Persons, who are acknowledg'd to have been subject to Errors should be obtruded on me as a Rule of my Faith, or as sufficient Argument to determine my Assent in so weighty a Matter. *Secondly*, Supposing, but not granting, that in the Church of *Rome* the true and pure Doctrine of *Jesus Christ* was preserv'd, yet still it is granted, that particular and private Men, who live in the visible Communion of that Church, may teach false and corrupt Doctrine. Here then I demand, How shall I certainly distinguish the Doctrine of the Church from the Opinions of private Men? And how shall I certainly know what is the true Meaning of the Church's Doctrine? They of the Church of *Rome* are not agreed who it is that has Authority to declare and expound the Doctrine
of

of their Church; whether it be the Pope, or a General Council, or neither alone, but both together. Or if they were unanimous in this Point, yet how shall I know whether such a particular Person, who possesses the Chair, be a true and lawful Pope, or such a particular Assembly, a true and lawful General Council? Or, Suppose they could satisfy me in this Demand, yet there is no Council now sitting, nor, if there were, could I go to them, or to the Pope, to receive Instruction; nor can the Pope, or a Council, be at leisure to satisfy the Demands of every private Enquirer. How then can I be sure that this or that particular Person does both rightly understand, and faithfully propose the Doctrine of the Church to me? Especially since there have been, and still are, eminent Members of the Church of *Rome*, who have accus'd each other of corrupt Doctrine, and even of Heresy it self. But, *Thirldy* and *Lastly*, There do

do appear to me to be much stronger Arguments to prove that the Church of *Rome* has actually err'd, and corrupted the Doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, (in the case of Transubstantiation, and some other her Tenents) than any that can be brought to prove her to be infallible. And, until I can be otherwise convinc'd, I cannot but conclude, That *to follow the Guidance of the Roman Church, is not the way to embrace the true and pure Doctrine of Jesus.*

XXII. Some there are who tell me, that, to find out the true and genuine Doctrine of *Jesus*, I must have recourse to the Tradition of the Church: And thus they set forth the Matter. *First*, They suppose that the true and genuine Doctrine of *Jesus* was undoubtedly taught by his Apostles and first Disciples. *Secondly*, That if any one did, or should have gone about to spread any false or spurious Doctrine, whilst these Apostles and Disciples were yet alive, They
who

who were sent on purpose, by *Jesus*, to preach his Doctrine, and were own'd, and submitted to accordingly by all Christian Churches, both could and would immediately convince all Churches of the Falseness and Spuriousness of such pretended Doctrine. *Thirdly*, That the Doctrine of *Jesus* being in all Churches publickly and constantly taught and preach'd, every succeeding Age and Generation must needs know, and could not possibly be ignorant, what their Fathers and immediate Predecessors own'd and taught as such. *Fourthly*, That therefore, if, at any time whatsoever, any new or spurious Doctrine was, or should be vented, by any Person or Persons, as the Doctrine of *Jesus*; all Christians must presently know, that this was none of his Doctrine, because it was not taught them as such by their immediate Predecessors. *Fifthly*, That therefore it is impossible that any new and spurious Doctrine could ever be broach'd in the World,

World, as a part of the Doctrine of *Jesus*, but it must needs meet with great Opposition: For all Christians do maintain, That it is a Sin to teach, or knowingly to own, any thing as the Doctrine of *Jesus*, which is not really so. *Sixthly*, That however some Men, out of Pride or Interest, may own and contend for any such novel Doctrines, yet it is impossible that any such Doctrine should ever come to be universally receiv'd by the whole Church, except we could suppose, either that the whole Church should join together to involve themselves and their Posterity for ever in a Sin; or else that a few Men, who first should vent an Opinion, could so impose upon the whole World, as to make them believe, that what they all may know to be a new and upstart thing (because they receiv'd it not from their Fathers and Predecessors) was a part of the ancient Doctrine of *Jesus*, which was all along, from Hand to Hand deliver'd down

to

to them: Both which things are absurd to conceive or imagine. And *Lastly*, That no part of the Doctrine of *Jesus* once delivered, could ever be obliterated, or wholly forgot in the World; because every Age of Christians, from the very first, who undoubtedly receiv'd the whole and entire Doctrine of *Jesus*, knew themselves to be indispensably oblig'd, both by God's Command, and also by that Love and Charity which they owed to their Posterity, to teach the same full and entire Doctrine which they receiv'd, unto their Children, and those who were to come after them. Go therefore to the Church (that is to the Church of *Rome*, say the Papists, to the Universal Church, *i. e.* to all Christians, say some Protestants) and see what are the Doctrines which are, and have been universally maintain'd; of whose Beginning no other Account can be given, but that *Jesus* and his Apostles taught them to the World: And there you have

have the entire and uncorrupted Doctrine of *Jesus*. But to this I answer, That, indeed, where there is an universal, or a very large and general Tradition concerning any thing; and where, from the nature of the thing itself, it appears to be highly rational and probable, that there is not, or could not be, any Error or Mistake in the Matter; in such a case as this no Man, I think, but an obstinate Sceptick, will offer to withstand the Evidence of such a Tradition. But, let a Tradition be ever so general, or even universal; yet, if it can be shewn, that there is not only a possibility, but also a fair likelihood and probability, that there may be a Mistake in the business: then, I think no Man can justly be blam'd if he refuses or suspends his Assent, until the Testimony of such a Tradition be clear'd, and vindicated from those rational Prejudices and Exceptions which may lie against it. Now, if it were so, that all Errors and Mistakes

stakes did ever immediately appear in their perfect Form, and full Growth, at their very Beginning; then it were most rational to conclude, that all Men must needs take notice of their first Appearance; and consequently, that, in all likelihood, any such Error must needs meet with many more Opponents than Abettors. But, on the contrary, it may well be suppos'd that Errors may have sprung up in the World, from such small Beginnings, and by such slow and unperceivable Degrees, that, after some Ages, it may be impossible for a Man to discover them to be Errors, except he has some other Rule, besides Tradition, to try them by, *viz.* either the Rule of common Reason, or some ancient and unalter'd Writing. As for Example; Is it not rational to conceive, that, in the first Ages of Christianity, they who preach'd and writ popular Discourses, might very innocently, and to good purpose, make use of Rhetorical Flights, and Figu-

rative Expressions, to strike the Fancies, and move the Affections, of the People to Virtue and Piety? And is it not likely enough, that those who came after them, might not only strive to imitate, but also to out-do them in bolder Flights, and more strain'd Schemes of Expression? And is it not also probable enough, that, in long Process of time, Ignorance, generally over-spreading the face of the World, and being joined with a profound Veneration for those ancient Preachers and Writers, might begin to interpret some of these Rhetorical and Figurative Expressions in a Literal and Logical Sense; and then conceive, that such their Interpretations were really and truly the ancient Doctrines deliver'd down to them? Especially if we consider, that there may have been some Men of great Power and Repute in the World, who might have taken a Pride and Delight, or whose Interest it might have been, to amuse the People with mysterious No-

tions

tion
igno
app
also
and
Strin
nera
fiden
ven
migh
rul'd
of s
whic
tho'
stim
Help
tain
and

me,
entire
my f
is to
call'd
And
the

tions and Fancies, and to keep them ignorant of the Truth. And thus it appears to be, not only possible, but also probable enough, That Errors and Mistakes as to the ancient Doctrine of *Jesus*, might come to be generally receiv'd without any considerable or notorious Opposition given to them; or that such Opposition might soon be suppress'd and overrul'd by the Power and Reputation of such prevailing Men. From all which I cannot but conclude, That *tho' the general Tradition or Testimony of the Church may be a good Help, yet it may not always be a certain Rule, to lead me into the entire and unalter'd Doctrine of Jesus.*

XXIII. Others there are, who tell me, That, to find out the true and entire Doctrine of *Jesus*, I must apply my self to the Holy Scripture; that is to say, to the Books commonly call'd the *Old and New Testament*. And because I look upon this to be the right Way I shall briefly and

C 2

plainly

plainly deliver my Thoughts, in relation to these Books. And first, of the *New Testament*; That the *New Testament*, as it was extant in the *Greek Tongue*, has been ever universally own'd by all Christians, as containing a true (tho' some deny it to be a full) Account of the Life and Doctrine of *Jesus*, is a thing so notorious, and so universally acknowledg'd, that I cannot find the least Ground or Reason to question it. Now, the History and Doctrine of *Jesus* being so well known unto the first Christians, by the Preaching of the Apostles and Disciples; and they being so ready, upon all Occasions, to lay down their Lives for the Truth of Christianity; it cannot be imagin'd, that ever they would so readily and universally receive and own such a Book, if it had contain'd any thing in it which was dissonant from that Doctrine which they had receiv'd. It is confess'd, indeed, that some of those Books which make up the Volume of the *New Testament*,

stament, (that is to say, the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, that of St. *James*, the Second of St. *Peter*, that of St. *Jude*, the Second and Third of St. *John*, and the *Revelations*) were not so soon, and so universally receiv'd throughout the Christian Church, as the rest of the Books were. The reason of which, apparently, was not, That these Books contain'd any thing in them contrary to what was deliver'd in the other Books of the *New Testament*, (for he that reads the whole, will plainly find, that there is a very compleat Agreement between them; the only seeming Discord, of St. *Paul's* Justification by Faith, and St. *James's* Justification by Works, being exactly and fully reconcil'd by considering, That St. *Paul* means no other Faith, but such as worketh by Love, *Gal. v. 6.* and St. *James* no other Works but such as proceed from Faith, *Jam. ii. 22.*) but because it was not at first universally known, who where the Authors of them.

Which abundantly shews the Care and Caution of the Christian Church, in not being hasty to receive and admit any Books, as authentick Records of their Doctrine, without very good Warrant for so doing. And therefore, since these same Books were, in a very little time after, receiv'd, and own'd to be of equal Authority with the rest of the *New Testament*; I cannot but from thence conclude, That those Churches, which, at the first, doubted concerning those Books, did soon receive most full and ample Satisfaction in that Matter, from those who had before receiv'd them. I conclude therefore, That *the Book of the New Testament, as it was extant in the Primitive Times, in the Greek Tongue, did contain a true Account of the Doctrine of Jesus.*

XXIV. That innumerable Copies of the *New Testament* were, in a very little time, dispers'd through all Places where Christianity was planted; That it has been, at different Times,

Times, and in very distant Places, translated into all (or almost all) Languages; and that Copies, both of the Original, and many of the several Translations, have been preserv'd with much Care, in a great many distant parts of the World, is allow'd by all, and deny'd by none. From whence I think we may gather, *First*, That *where the generality of the Greek Copies of the New Testament do agree in the very same Words, there we have undoubtedly, the true and authentick Words of the New Testament.* For, altho' some Mistakes might creep into some Copies, either thro' the Wickedness or Negligence of some particular Men; yet, where so many Copies of a Book have been so carefully preserv'd, and in such distant Parts of the World, it is not to be imagin'd, that the self-same Error, in any Expression, should ever be propagated thro' the generality of them. *Secondly*, That *where the Words or Expressions of divers*

Greek Copies do differ one from another; yet if the Sense and Meaning be exactly the same in all, or almost all; there we have certainly the true Sense and Meaning of the New Testament. For it is easy to apprehend, that a Transcriber might, by a small Mistake, put one Word or Expression of the same Signification, instead of another: But that the same Sense should be punctually preserv'd in all or almost all Copies, is not to be imagin'd, except it were the true Sense deliver'd from the Beginning. Thirdly, That if there may be found any different Readings in divers Copies of the New Testament, which disagree in Sense as well as in Words, (which scarce ever happens in any thing which is accounted a material Point of Religion) then it seems to be most fit and proper to admit of that Reading and Sense which best agrees with the Tenour of the whole; with the ancientest and best esteem'd Translations; and with the evident Principles

principles of sound Reason. And if any ~~be~~ Place so obscure as that none of these Ways will afford any Light into its Meaning, then I think that no stress ought to be laid upon it in any necessary part of Religion.

XXV. But some will demand, How we are sure of the Sense and Meaning, even of those Places of the *New Testament*, where there is no difference about the Words? In Answer to this, I have already shewn (§ 21.) that we are not to follow the Guidance of the Church of Rome, to know the true Doctrine of *Jesus*; nor therefore, consequently, to know the true Meaning of the *New Testament*, in which his Doctrine is own'd to be contain'd. I have shewn also, (§ 22.) That tho' general Tradition may be a good Help, yet may it not always be a certain Rule to lead one to the unalter'd Doctrine of *Jesus*; nor therefore, consequently, to the true and genuine Interpretation of the *New Testament*. Since therefore there is

no other way to be found, I conclude, That *the New Testament is to be interpreted the same way that other Books are*; that is, by considering the Sense and Propriety of the Words and Sentences, and the ordinary Figures of Speech, as they are commonly us'd in the same Book, and in others written in the same Language, and about the same time; together with the Scope, Drift, Coherence, and Occasion of the Discourse. To which end, every Man that is learned, being bound to use his best Endeavour to know the Will of God (as I have shewn, § 14.) is oblig'd, according to the Measure of his Learning, to consult Lexicons, Commentators, and ancient Writers, and to use all other Helps, that he may both satisfy himself, and also be able to inform others.

XXVI. But perhaps I shall be told, That when a Man has done all this, to the best of his Power, yet, after all, he may be mistaken; as it appears

appears that many Learned Men are; since they oppose and contradict one another about the Meaning of the *New Testament*. To this I answer, That since I have shewn (§ 3.) that all necessary things (whether as to Belief or Practice) in Religion, are easy to be understood; I must from hence conclude, That *a sober and honest Enquirer cannot easily be mistaken in the Interpretation of those Places of the New Testament which do contain any necessary part of Religion*. And as for other Parts and Passages of it; if Men would be but peaceable, (which is plainly enough commanded in the *New Testament*) their Mistakes about them could do no harm. And, again; Since I have shewn, (§ 14.) That God requires no more from a Man, but his best Endeavours to know and perform his Will; I do hence conclude, That *if a Man be mistaken in his Interpretation, even of any such place as contains some necessary part of Religion; yet, if this Mistake be*

C 6

purely

purely an Error of the Understanding, and does not proceed from any Neglect or wilful Fault of the Person so mistaking; God will never be offended with him for it. And then, What Hurt can there be in such a Mistake as this?

XXVII. But it may be demanded, What shall they do to find out the Meaning of the *New Testament*, who do not understand any thing of the *Greek*, which is the only authentick Language of this Book? Which is evidently the Case of much the greatest part of Mankind. I answer, That *he who is ignorant of the Greek Tongue*, being yet oblig'd to use his best Endeavour, (§ 14.) *must do the best he can by reading some Translation or Translations of it; (or if he cannot read himself, by hearing them read; and by asking and enquiring from such of his Acquaintance as he believes to be Persons of Sincerity and Knowledge, to know what is the Sense and Doctrine of the New Testament,*
and

and the Will of God therein contain'd.
 And, since God requires no more from any Man, but his best Endeavour, (§ 14.) it follows, *That if such a Man be mistaken, and cannot help it, God will not be offended with him neither for it.*

XXVIII. And one thing more let me add, for the sake of those who are not skill'd in the *Greek* Tongue, viz. That since there have many Translations been made of the *New Testament*, most of them by Persons well skill'd in Languages, of good Repute for their Honesty and Integrity, and who could not but know before hand, that their Translations would be narrowly sifted and examin'd by Learned Men; (which must needs make them careful to commit as few faults as they could;) and since all those things which God requires from Men must needs be easy enough to be understood (§ 3.) and therefore easy to be translated and express'd in any Language; I cannot but

but conclude, That a *sober and impartial Enquirer* may be very well *assur'd of the Doctrine of Jesus*, even from the *Translations of the New Testament*, tho' he does not understand the *Greek Original*. And, for as much as I can understand of the *Matter*, if Men did stand only upon the *honest and downright Sense and Meaning of plain Places*, (which only can give us good Assurance in Religion,) and would not quarrel about critical Niceties in such Texts as are confessedly obscure, I believe there is scarce any Translation of the *New Testament* so defective, but might be a sufficient Guide to any sober Man, to lead him to the *Doctrine of Jesus*.

XXIX. Having thus spoken what I design'd of the *New Testament*, I come to say something of the *Old*. And here, that the *Jews* in the Days of *Jesus* had among them a Book written in *Hebrew*, and some small part of it in the *Chaldee Tongue*, which we now call the *Old Testament*,

ment, Scriptu of God That knowle and al rag'd t Word self, an evident New must c that B to be e of Jesu Comma found, all Ch sus; ex that Je ligatio XX has be guages Origin in dist

ment, which they call'd the *Holy Scripture*, and esteem'd as the Word of God, is a thing beyond Dispute. That this Book was own'd and acknowledged, quoted and referr'd to, and all People exhorted and encourag'd to search and study it, as the Word of God, both by *Jesus* himself, and also by his Disciples, is most evident to any one who reads the *New Testament*. From whence I must conclude, That *the Doctrine of that Book, as it was then extant, is to be esteem'd as part of the Doctrine of Jesus; and that those Laws and Commands which are there to be found, are to be kept and observ'd by all Christians the Followers of Jesus; except where it can be shewn that Jesus has freed us from the Obligation of them.*

XXX. Moreover, since this Book has been translated into as many Languages, and as many Copies of the Original have been carefully kept, in distant parts of the World, as of
the

the *New Testament*; I do conclude That the very same things which just now were said concerning the Words the Meaning and Way of interpreting the *New Testament*, will hold good concerning the *Old Testament* also, as far as they can be accommodated to it.

XXXI. There are some certain Books and Fragments, which among the Protestants are well known by the Name of *Apocryphal*, to which the Papists give the Title of *Deuterocanonical*. These Pieces the Papists contend to be a real Part of the *Old Testament*, and of equal Authority with the other Books of it: But the Protestants will not allow their Authority to be sacred, altho' they grant that there are many useful and profitable things contain'd in them. Now, he that is not able to search into Antiquity, for the Resolving of this Controversy, may by another way be satisfy'd about it. For, since the *Jews* (from whom the Christians originally receiv'd

receiv'd the Scriptures of the *Old Testament*) do all of them, and ever did, unanimously reject the same *Apocryphal* Books and Fragments, as being no Part of their Holy Scripture; I think it may from hence be sufficiently concluded, That, *as to the Controversy about the Apocryphal Scripture, the Protestants are in the right, and the Papists in the wrong.* And yet, if the Authority of those Pieces were as great as the Papists would have it, I see not how it could make any Alteration in my Religion: For I do not find any thing in them, but what is easily reconcilable with the rest of the Holy Scripture.

XXXII. But there are some Difficulties which seem to arise concerning what I have discoursed, to which it will be necessary to give a full and satisfactory Answer. And, *First*, If all be granted that has hitherto been said; yet, how shall I be sure that the Book of the Holy Scriptures contains, not only truly, but also fully and

and entirely the Doctrine of *Jesus*; so that nothing is to be esteem'd as a part of his Religion, but what is contain'd in the Scriptures. To this I might answer, That there are several Passages in the Scripture itself, which do give us to understand that the whole Law and Will of God, as far as it is needful for Man to know them, are contained in those Holy Writings; (as the Protestant Divines do sufficiently make appear in the Management of this Controversy against the Papists.) But waving this, I think it is enough to say, That it is not, indeed, impossible in itself, but that *Jesus* might have made known other Particulars of Doctrine, and of the Will of God, besides what is consign'd to us by the Scripture. And if any Man can effectually prove, that any such Doctrine or Precept was delivered by him; I think, that whosoever is convinced of the Proof, ought to believe that Doctrine and obey that Precept, which appear to be so deliver'd.

ver'd. But he that does his hearty and sincere endeavour to find out the Doctrine and Will of God, deliver'd to Man by Jesus, and is not able, with all his Diligence, to discover any more of it, than what is recorded in the Scripture; if he faithfully keeps and observes as much of it as he is able there to discover, it is plain that God requires no more from him, (§ 14.) and therefore certainly will not punish him for want of any thing further.

XXXIII. Secondly, It may be objected, That in Reading these Books, there do appear to be some Passages which are in themselves absurd, and contrary to the plain Dictates of every Man's Reason and Understanding; and some which are irreconcilable with one another. Now, that the Doctrine of Jesus is certainly true, must be allow'd because it is confirmed by God. That both parts of a Contradiction cannot be true, is acknowledged by all Men: And no Man, I think,

I think, can own that for a Truth which is contrary to the plain Dictate of his Reason and Understanding, which to every Man is, and must be the Standard of all Truth whatsoever. For there can be no reason why any Man receives and owns any thing for a Truth, but only because he apprehends it to be conformable unto the plain and self-evident Notions which are already planted in his Mind. Here then it may be demanded, how it can be possible that the Scriptures should contain the *true and uncorrupted Doctrine and Religion of Jesus?* To this I answer: *First, That I cannot find any appearance of a Contradiction, throughout the Holy Scriptures, in any Point of Doctrine, or Rule of Manners, but what is so easy and obvious to be reconciled, that no Man, I think, of Candour and Ingenuity, but would be ashamed to object it. Secondly, And, as for the few seeming Discordances, which do occur in the Circumstances of some Historical Narrations;*

tions; though I, perhaps, am not able to reconcile them, yet it may be that the things themselves may not be absolutely irreconcilable. But suppose they were, yet it is no derogation to the Truth of the History, (as to the main Substance of it) or of the Doctrine contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, that some of the sacred Writers have been mistaken in the Relation of some small and inconsiderable Circumstances. There are several Historians and Chroniclers, which give an Account of the Life and Reign of many of our Kings of *England*; and altho' they differ in many Circumstances of things, yet this was never made an Argument to doubt of the Truth of the main History, wherein they all agree. And why may not the Scripture Historians be as favourably censured as all other Historians in the World are? Thirdly, There are many things which are above my Reason and Understanding, which I cannot comprehend in my Mind, nor frame a clear and distinct

stinct Notion of; which yet I cannot
 say, are contrary to my Reason: Be-
 cause (though they are above my
 reach, yet) I do not find that they
 do contradict any of those plain and
 self-evident Principles which are im-
 planted in my Understanding. For
 Example, I am not able distinctly to
 apprehend how the smallest Particles of
 Matter, which can be assign'd, is yet
 in it self capable of being for ever di-
 vided; so that no part of Matter
 though ever so small, can ever be
 much as conceived to be absolutely
 indivisible. And yet this is so far from
 being contrary to my Reason, that my
 Reason it self does fully satisfy me
 that the thing is so, tho' I am not
 able to comprehend the manner of it.
 The same thing also may be said con-
 cerning the necessity of something be-
 ing without any Beginning (of which
 see § 56.) Now, *if I meet with any
 thing in Scripture, which is thus above
 my Reason, but not contrary to it,
 I cannot refuse my Assent unto it*

(I mean

(I mean always, upon a Supposition that the Words do appear evidently to carry such a Sense.) For I cannot conclude such a thing to be impossible, because I do not find it contrary to my Reason, though above it. And if it be a thing in my Apprehension possible, I must believe it to be true, when I find that God has declared it so to be. Other things, again, there are, which are directly contrary unto those self-evident Notions and Principles, which my Reason finds to be connatural with it self. For Example; That *a Part is equal to the Whole*; and such like Absurdities. Now, if any such *Propositions* as these, which are contrary to my Reason, should occur to me in Scripture, I cannot possibly believe them to be true in a literal Sense; (for that were to renounce the clear Dictates of my Reason and Understanding, upon which the Certainty of all things which I believe or know, is ultimately built; and without which, I could have no

Certainty

Certainty of the Being of God, or the Truth of any Religion;) *and therefore I must needs understand them to be meant figuratively.* And that Figure which best agrees to such Words, according to the most common Custom of Speech, and is most conformable to common Sense and Reason, I think is always to be preferred. I never read any Book, to my knowledge, but in it I found many Expressions which, taken literally and strictly, were absurd and ridiculous; but, taken figuratively, as 'tis evident they were intended, did contain very good Sense and Meaning. Since then the Holy Scriptures were written in such Words and Expressions as were commonly us'd among Men in Speaking and Writing, why should we think that strange in them, which is so usual in all other Books?

XXXIV. *Thirdly,* It may be objected, That this Doctrine which I have taught, leaves every Man entirely to his own Reason and Understanding,

ing to find out the true Religion, and the Way to Heaven. Now, since there is so great a difference between the Notions and Sentiments of different Men, it must needs follow, that, all Men being left wholly to themselves, there must necessarily be great Variety and even Contrariety of Opinions among them concerning Religion. And if God requires no more from any Man, but to do his best Endeavour, and to chuse that way which he thinks to be the truest; from hence it will follow, That two Men, who are contrary one to another in the Point of Religion, may yet both be in the right Way to Heaven; and a *Turk*, or a *Heathen*, may be saved, as well as a Christian, if they are but strongly perswaded that they are in the right. I answer; *First*, That if the Objection means, that I leave every Man to his own Reason and Understanding, without any other help, to find out the Truth of Religion, it is a Mistake. For I have asserted, That
D every

every Man, according to the Measure of his Learning, ought to make use of all the Means and Helps he can, to understand the Scriptures, and the Will of God, (See § 14. and § 25.) But if the Meaning be, That *I leave every Man to chuse that Religion which, after a serious Enquiry, appears to him to be the best*; (which is all that I contend for:) In this I say no more than what all Men must, and do say as well as I. For, either a Man must never enquire into the Truth of his Religion at all, (and then he chuses his Religion by mere chance; and since there are many false Religions, and but one true, 'tis great odds but he lights upon a wrong one;) Or, if he does enquire, either he must chuse that which he thinks not to be the best, (and then he acts against his Conscience,) or that which he thinks is the best; Which is what I assert, and what every Man of Sense professes himself to do. *Secondly*, As there are many Differences in the No-

tions and Sentiments of Men, concerning those things which are, in some measure, abstruse and obscure; so, on the other side there are many things so apparent, and evident, that Men who are sincere and unbiaſſed, if they have but common Senſe, can never differ about them: Amongſt which, I think, I may reckon all thoſe things which God requires of neceſſity to any Man's Salvation (§ 3.) And whereas the World has, for theſe many Years, found, that compelling Men to this or that Religion, contrary to their own Sentiments, has been ſo far from begetting Unity of any ſort, that on the contrary, it has even diſtracted Mankind, not only with variety of Opinions, (each Party taking a delight to thwart other,) but alſo with War and Confuſion: If every Man were left to himſelf to follow what Religion he pleaſes, (as he ſhall answer to God for his Sincerity,) it is very probable that moſt Men, having no worldly intereſt to ſerve by this or

that Religion, would, in time, be brought to agree in all the great and necessary Truths of Religion; which are plain and evident to every sober and inquisitive Person. And as for things not absolutely necessary, and of an inferior sort, (as I have said, § 26.) if Men would be but peaceable, their Mistakes, and consequently their Differences about them, could do no great harm. But if Men will still differ even about the essential and necessary Parts of Religion, I know no Remedy for it upon Earth; but must refer the Matter wholly to the Judgment of God in Heaven. *Thirdly*, I do not maintain, That he who is in an Error, that is, a *Turk*, or an *Heathen* (whatsoever the strength and sincerity of his Persuasion may be,) is in as sure a Way to Heaven and Salvation, as he who is an Orthodox Man, and a Christian. How God will deal with those that are mistaken, and cannot help it, I do not determine. All that I would insinuate (§ 14.) is, That he

will

Part
will
or M
a pur
and n
of hi
rewar
Mean
XX
jected
effect
Force
ment,
lefact
great
such
himse
in his
was t
comm
which
fore, a
his D
accord
Magis
of M
to dis

will not punish any Man for any Error or Mistake, which he falls into thro' a pure Defect of his Understanding, and not through any Fault or Neglect of his Will. But how far he will reward such a person for his good Meaning, is more than I can tell.

XXXV. *Fourthly*, It may be objected, That this Doctrine does, in effect, undermine and enervate the Force and Power of all Civil Government, by opening a way for all Malefactors to escape Punishment, how great soever their Crimes may be. If such a Person should plead thus for himself, That he was fully persuaded in his Mind and Conscience, that it was the Will of God that he should commit such a Theft, or Murther, of which he is accused; and that therefore, according to this Doctrine, it was his Duty, in the sight of God, to act according to this Persuasion; The Magistrate who knows not the Hearts of Men can never be able certainly to discover, but that this is a real

D 3

Truth,

Truth, that he was so persuaded. And if every Man, in all the Duties of Religion is bound to act according to his own Sense and Persuasion of Things; with what Conscience can a Magistrate punish such a Person for that Fact, which, for aught he knows, it was his Duty to commit? I will not say, but that it may so fall out, that a Man may think it to be his Duty to commit the most horrid Villanies, since *Jesus Christ* himself assures his Disciples, That the Time would come, that whoso killed them, would think he did God Service, *John* xvi. 2. And how far God Almighty will be merciful unto such Persons who commit such Facts out of pure Ignorance, and not out of Malice, I had rather St. *Paul* should determine than I. (See *1 Tim.* i. 13.) But to the Objection, I think it sufficient to answer, That the Civil Magistrate, as well as other Men, is bound to act according to the clearest Conviction, and strongest Persuasion of his own Mind. If therefore,

fore, upon the Examination of all Circumstances, he be well satisfied, and really believes that such a Plea from a Malefactor is no real Truth; but only a mere Trick, and Pretence, in hopes to escape Punishment; he ought to take no notice of it, but to pronounce his Sentence according to the Law. But that which comes up close to the Objection, and which, I think, is the fullest and truest Answer, is this, *viz.* That *the Civil Magistrate has nothing to do to enquire or regard how the Matter stands between God and the Conscience of the Transgressor of the Law of the Land, so as to be thereby any way influenced in the Passing his Judgment.* It is enough to him, if he be well and thoroughly convinced, that the Laws by which he acts are no way contrary to the known Law of God. There are many Cases wherein a Man offends highly against the Law of God, in which the Civil Magistrate has no Power to inflict any Punishment on the Offender; because

the Fault which he may have committed, does not, it may be, any way tend to the damage or disturbance of the Civil Society; which, and which only, is committed to the Care of the Magistrate. Such, for Example, are many Acts of Covetousness, or of Prodigality, and other Sins; against which it is not possible to provide by any Human Laws. And, on the other side, There are some Cases, wherein a Man may stand absolved before the Tribunal of God, and yet be very justly condemned by the Magistrate. Thus, for instance, if a Man has committed Theft or Murther, and, upon a sincere and hearty Repentance, has obtained the Pardon of his Sins from God; yet, nevertheless, if such a Person be accused, and legally convicted of such Crimes before the Civil Magistrate, he not only may, but ought to put the Law of the Land in execution against him, though he believes him to be ever so penitent; that it may be a Terror unto others. For, if this ought

ought not to be done, every Malefactor, by a Pretence of Repentance, (which cannot certainly be discovered by any but God,) might escape the Lash of the Law: By which Means all wicked Men would be encouraged to commit all Sorts of Crimes. Thus also, when the Children of *Israel* were commanded by God to conquer the Land of *Canaan*, we read how they sent Spies to make a Discovery of the Land, that they might the more easily invade it. Now it is most certain, that these Spies did nothing but what they had God Almighty's Warrant for; and yet, if they had been taken by any of the *Canaanitish* Magistrates, and legally convicted of their Design: who doubts but that it had been lawful for them to have punished them, according to the Law of War, and the Law of Nations? For it is none of the Magistrate's Business, to enquire who keeps or transgresses the Laws of God; (for the Law of God extends to many Cases, where the Magistrate's Au-

thority has nothing to do;) but they who transgress the Laws of the Land, and thereby disturb the Peace of the Common-wealth, are, upon a due Conviction, to be punished by the Magistrate, (without any farther Enquiry;) it being his Business to do every thing which appears to be necessary for the Preservation of the Weal-Publick, provided that he does nothing which is contrary to the known Laws of God, who is the supreme King and Lord of all.

XXXVI. But *Fifthly*, it will be objected, That whatever becomes of the Civil Magistrate's Power, yet this Doctrine which here is taught, must certainly defeat and cancel all that Authority with which the Church is endowed and invested. For though the Civil Magistrate has no more to look after but only the Peace and Preservation of the Common-wealth; yet surely it is the Duty of the Church to take cognizance of those things which are committed merely against the Law
of

of God. But how can the Church call any Man to an Account for any Sin or Transgression, when a Man may plead for himself, That he thought it was his Duty? which Plea, if really true (and who but God can disprove it?) is sufficient, according to this Doctrine, to justify him before God; and consequently to indemnify him from all Censures of the Church. To this I answer, That the Authority of the Church (*i. e.* of a Christian Society) is twofold, *viz.* Either that Authority wherewith it is invested immediately by God, or that which is conferred on it by the Civil Laws and Constitution of the Kingdom or Commonwealth. The latter of these is a Civil Authority, though exercised by Ecclesiastical Persons, because it is derived altogether from the Civil Power; and therefore, the Consideration of it must be referred to what is but now said touching the Civil Magistrate. But as for that Authority which is given to the Church

immediately by God; it is evidently no more than this, *viz.* An Authority to preach the Gospel, and to persuade Men every where to receive it; and an Authority to exclude those Men out of the Society, (that is, out of the visible Communion of it) who do not profess the true Christian Faith, and live according to the Christian Law. Other Authority than this does not appear to be given to the Church by God. And nothing that I have said, does in the least tend to abridge them any way as to the Exercise of this Power. *The Church may and ought to preach the Gospel, and persuade Men to embrace it. And however any Man may be excused before God, by invincible Ignorance, yet he is not to be suffered in the visible Communion of the Church, if he does not believe and live as a Christian.*

XXXVII. *Sixthly,* It may be objected, that I have several times in this Discourse made use of a Distinction, which Distinction is nevertheless rendered



der'd altogether useless and impertinent by the main Design of the Discourse it self. The Distinction is between *necessary* Matters of Religion and such as are *not necessary*, (which is referred to § 26. and elsewhere.) But if no Man can be obliged in any Matter of Religion, any farther than to do his best Endeavour; from thence it must follow, That all Things are alike necessary in Religion. For whatsoever is within a Man's Power, according to this Doctrine, is necessary for him; and whatsoever is not within his Power is not necessary; so that the very same thing may be necessary in respect of one Man, and not necessary in respect of another; which confounds the Distinction and renders it useless. To this I answer, That *by things necessary I mean all such as it is a Sin for a Man to be ignorant of, if the Knowledge of them be within his Power.* Such as are, That Jesus is the Son of God, That God is to be worshiped, &c. By things not necessary,

sary, I mean, such as a Man is not obliged so much as to search after the Ignorance whereof shall not be accounted sinful before God, although it might have been in a Man's Power to have known them. Such are a great many curious Speculations, which Divines do trouble themselves and the World with; which they themselves do yet confess, are not necessary to any Man's Salvation; and consequently, which a Man is no more obliged to trouble his Head with, than with any problems, either in Geometry, or Natural Philosophy.

XXXVIII. *Seventhly,* It may be objected, That this Doctrine must needs encourage Men to continue in their Ignorance, and not to take any Care or Pains to inform themselves concerning the Truth of Religion, or any of the Duties of it. For, Why should a Man take any Pains to get more Knowledge, (which will, it may be, bring Trouble in the Practice of it,) when Ignorance is no manner of

Bar

Bar to his Salvation; For, let him but live according to the Knowledge which he already has, and God, it seems, requires no more from him. To this I answer, *That for a Man to act according to the best of his Knowledge, will not serve his turn; except he has used his best Endeavour, by all Means, to know and understand the Will of God as perfectly as he can,* (as I have shewn all Men are bound to do, § 14.) which, though it is a Comfort to those who are ignorant, and cannot help it, yet is no manner of Encouragement or Excuse for those whose Ignorance is their own Fault or Neglect.

XXXIX. My Reason having thus brought me to embrace the Christian Religion, and directed me where and how to seek for the particular Doctrines of it; it follows now that I should put this Speculation into Practice; that I should search the Scriptures with all the diligence I can, and set my Mind with all its Faculties on work,

work, to find out, as much as I am able, of the Will of God, that I may the better conform my self unto it. This, with God's help, I design speedily to do: And the result of my Thoughts shall be published to the World, if what I here write prove acceptable. But, in the mean time, *I think it not improper here to add some general Considerations, which may serve as Rules and Guides to me, or to any other Person, who shall set himself upon such an Enquiry; to direct our Judgments aright, to the true Doctrine of Christianity, and to keep us from all Mistakes about it.*

XL. First, Then, I take it for granted, That the Christian Religion is calculated for Men of Reason and Understanding, that is, That it is fit to satisfy and convince every sober Man, who seriously considers the Arguments on which it relies; and is not led astray by Passion, by Prejudice, or worldly Interest. That this is so, appears very evidently from hence, because

because both *Jesus* and his Apostles do appeal to the common Reason and Understandings of Men, to judge of what they taught. *Yea, and why, even of your selves, judge ye not what is right?* says *Jesus*, *Luke* xii. 57. *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good*, says *St. Paul*. *1 Thess.* v. 21. *Be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asketh you, a Reason of the Hope that is in you*, says *St. Peter*, *1 Pet.* iii. 15. *Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God*, says *St. John*, *1 Joh.* iv. 1. Hence then I conclude, That there can be nothing in the Christian Religion, which contradicts the clear and evident Principles of Natural Reason. For otherwise, a rational Man could not be a Christian. (See § 33.)

XLI. Secondly, It appears plain to me, that the Christian Religion was calculated, not only, nor chiefly, for Men of great and deep Learning; but also for those of ordinary, plain, and mean Capacities; that is to say,
That

That there is nothing necessary in Christianity, but what may be as well understood by every ordinary illiterate Man, as by the greatest Scholar. If this were not so, it would not be possible for an unlearned Man to be as good a Christian as one that is learned: Whereas the contrary is more apparently declared in the *New Testament*. *I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes*, says *Jesus* *Matth. xi. 25*. To which, the Words of *St. Paul* do exactly agree, *1. Cor. 19. to ver. 7.* of the second Chapter. And the same *St. Paul* gives us a Caution, That *Philosophy* should not corrupt our Christianity, *Col. ii. 8*. And warns *Timothy* against *Science falsely so called*, *2 Tim. vi. 20*. But there is nothing so much as intimated throughout the whole *Bible*, that *Philosophy*, or any other Human Learning will qualify a Man even the better, to become a Christian.

I con

I confess, indeed, That, as things stand at this time in the World, it is highly convenient that the Teachers and Preachers of Christianity should be competently skill'd in Human Learning; that they may be the better able to defend their Religion, and the Purity of it, against those who use so much Art and Skill either to corrupt or oppose it. But where a Man sets up, nor for a Teacher, but only for a true Believer, it is evident, from what has been said, that he has no need of Scholarship; but only of a plain and sober Understanding, to make him capable of all necessary Instruction for a good Christian. Or else, Why should the Gospel be preach'd so particularly to the *Poor*, *Matth. xi. 5.* who are commonly illiterate? And how should the *Poor in this World* become so *rich in Faith*, as *St. James* tells us, *Jam. ii. 5.* From whence I think I may conclude, That all such Doctrines, the Understanding and Proof whereof depend either

on the subtle Speculations of human Philosophy, or the Niceties and Criticisms of Grammatical Learning, or the curious Knowledge of History and Antiquity, are not to be esteemed as necessary Parts of Christianity.

XLII. *Thirdly*, It is no less evident to me, that the main Design of *Jesus*, and of his Disciples, whom he sent to preach the Gospel, was, to make Men not wiser, as to Matters of Speculation, but better, and more virtuous as to their Lives and Actions. *Knowledge puffeth up; but Charity edifieth*, saith *St. Paul*. 1 Cor. viii. 1. Thus also, *Chap. xiii.* of the same Epistle, he gives us to understand, that the Gift of *Tongues* and of *Prophecy*, the Understanding of all *Mysteries*, and all *Knowledge*, and *Faith*, are of no value before God, without *Charity*. And that by *Charity* he means, a Life led in the Practice of Virtue and Piety, sufficiently appears by the sequel of that Chapter. The same *St. Paul* tells us, *Tit. ii. 13.* that *the*
Grace

Part I.
Grace
on, ba
what
more
Specul
teachi
ness,
live so
this p
multit
alledg
only a
6, &c.
ry Ma
Which
it is ou
our Li
are ch
grant,
pleases
ly Cer
manne
Moral
to the
does c
certain

Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men; (For what end? To make them more wise, more learned, or more lofty in their Speculations? No such thing: But,) teaching us, That, denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; and to omit a multitude of Texts, which might be alledged in so plain a Matter, I shall only add what we are told, Rom. ii. 6, &c. That God will render unto every Man according to his Deeds, &c. Which is a plain Demonstration, that it is our Deeds, that is, our Practices, our Lives and Conversations, that we are chiefly oblig'd to take care of. I grant, indeed, that God may, if he pleases, command things that are purely Ceremonial, and such as have no manner of Influence upon Virtue and Morality, as undoubtedly he did unto the Children of Israel: And if he does command any such things, 'tis certain that we owe Obedience to them

them by virtue of that Authority which God has over us. He may also reveal such Truths as are merely speculative, and have nothing practical in them: And whosoever is convinced of any such Revelation, is undoubtedly bound to give his Assent to the things so revealed, altho' they are beyond the reach of his Understanding; (as I have said, § 33.) But from what I have here said I think I may conclude, That *since Virtue and Morality are undoubtedly the chief Design of Christianity, they ought to be chiefly regarded and attended to by all Christians. Nor ought any thing which is purely Ceremonial, or Speculative, to be reckon'd as a necessary Part of Christian Religion; except it appears very evidently that God has revealed, or commanded it. Very evidently, I say: For, when a thing is conceived in dark and doubtful Expressions, it is very liable to be mistaken; and he that is guilty of such a Mistake, can very hardly be charged with a Fault.*

ledge
butes,
gather
(antec
dent fr
by St.
of him
are ch
the th
eterna
20. (S
Gentil
do by
the La
are a
shew t
their
bearing
the me
sing one
althoug
on, w
Light
repeate
Holy S

XLIII. *Fourthly*, That the Knowledge of God Almighty, his Attributes, and his Law, may, in part, be gathered from the Light of Nature (antecedent to any Revelation) is evident from Reason; and acknowledged by St. Paul. *For the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal Power and Godhead, Rom. i. 20. (See Psal. xix. 1.) And when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by Nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their Thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another, Rom. ii. 14, 15.* Now, although all things relating to Religion, which may be known by the Light of Nature, are, I think, again repeated and farther explained by the Holy Scripture: Yet because it may
be

be that this will not appear so plainly to every one, I think it necessary here to note, That *we are obliged to give our Assent to those Truths, and our Obedience to those Laws of Religion which we are able to discover by our Natural Reason, although the same should not appear to us to be again repeated in Scripture.* For, for this very reason St. Paul pronounces the ancient Gentiles to be *without Excuse, because that when they knew GOD,* that is, had some Knowledge of him by their natural Understanding, *they glorified him not as GOD,* by owning and obeying him, *Rom. i. 20, 21. &c.* And what is it else, but an Appeal to the natural Notions of Mankind, when he exhorts us, That *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, we should think on these things,* Phil. iv. 8.

Treatise
he has
particul
of, he
plainly,
will he
often a
and ref
tice ma
Design.
tioned
rally, a
Subject
ways e
and Ex
Meanin
stood.
what is
a Writ
pressions
used fig
of Allus
times v
city of
to the

XLIV. *Fifthly*, He that writes a Treatise upon any Subject, whatsoever he has a Mind that his Reader should particularly observe, and be convinced of, he will be sure to lay it down plainly, as a main Conclusion; nor will he fail (if he be discreet) as often as Occasion requires, to repeat and refer to it, that the more Notice may be taken of his Meaning and Design. Such Things as are mentioned only occasionally and collaterally, and not as any Part of the main Subject of the Discourse, are not always expressed with so much Care and Exactness, but that often even the Meaning of them may be misunderstood. Nor can we be always certain what is the true Sense and Opinion of a Writer, from such accidental Expressions; (which sometimes may be used figuratively, sometimes by way of Allusion or Accommodation, sometimes with Reference to the Capacity of People, without any Regard to the literal Truth of them) except

E

cept

cept he gives us some farther Explication of his Mind. From whence, I think, I may conclude, *That the necessary Doctrines and Precepts of the Christian Religion, are not to be gather'd from those collateral and occasional Expressions which are scatter'd up and down in the Scriptures, but from the main Scope and Design of the whole Bible in general, and of each Book of it in particular.*

XLV. I have thus briefly and plainly given, I hope, a rational Account of Religion; and of Christianity in general. If I find that what I have here writ is likely to do any good in the World, I shall proceed, with God's Assistance, to draw out and publish a particular Account of the Doctrines to be believed, and Duties to be practised, by a Christian.

The End of the First Part.



A

GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION:

PART II. and III.

IN WHICH

The Nature of the Christian Religion is particularly enquired into, and explain'd.



CO

GE

I.

the C
grante
Matter
Thing
fore
the D
certain
am n
sign a

THE
CONTINUATION
OF A
GENTLEMAN'S Religion.

PART II.

I. **T**HE *Holy Scriptures* being the only authentick Record that I am able to find of the Christian Religion, I take it for granted, that they *do express divine Matters really and truly as the Things are in themselves*: And therefore I cannot but believe, that all the Doctrine therein deliver'd is most certainly true, altho' many times I am not able to understand the Design and Meaning of some Expressions

E 3

sions and Passages which do occur therein. I think it indeed to be very proper, that Men of any reasonable Learning and Prudence should modestly offer their Thoughts to the World in order to the explaining of such Places of the Scriptures as appear to be abstruse and difficult: *But he who speaks his own Words* (and not those of Scripture) *can therein only offer his own Apprehensions*; to which no Man can be oblig'd to subscribe, any farther than as he is in his own Reason convinc'd of the Truth of them, and their Consonancy with the Scriptures.

II. I do not apprehend that any implicit Faith is due to the Church of Rome, which challenges it, (*Part I. § 21.*) much less sure to any other Church, which does not require it. *When, therefore, any Church, much more when any private Men do offer me any Doctrine of Religion in their own Words, I think I ought to consider, First, Whether what they say is intel-*

Part I
intelli
lig'd
above
hend,
sible
Assent
does n
Second
the se
for, if
it is i
(Part
of Scr
level
son, v
seem
the Tr
solid
son o
trine
yet sti
fore is
can be
endeav
Trial
am n

intelligible: For tho' we may be oblig'd to believe such Things as are above our Understanding to comprehend, (*Part I. § 33.*) yet it is impossible for any Man to give an explicit Assent to any Form of Words, if he does not know the Meaning of them. Secondly, *whether it is agreeable to the self-evident Principles of Reason*; for, if I apprehend it to be otherwise, it is impossible for me to believe it, (*Part I. § 33.*) Nor must any Text of Scripture be interpreted above the level of plain and self-evident Reason, whatever the literal Sense may seem to be. And, Thirdly, *whether the Truth of it can be prov'd by any solid Argument*, either from Reason or Scripture; for tho' a Doctrine be both intelligible and possible, yet still it may be false; and therefore is not to be believ'd except it can be prov'd. These Rules I have endeavour'd strictly to observe in the Trial of those Doctrines which I am now about to propose; and I

desire my Reader carefully to make use of the same, in the Examination of all that I shall offer unto him. But here I must desire him to take notice, that I do suppose him to be well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and also with the common Arguments, upon which the several Parties of Christians do ground and maintain their Opinions: And therefore, for his Ease, as well as my own, I shall save myself the Labour of mentioning such Arguments and Places of Scripture, as are usually brought to prove those Points, which are generally acknowledged by all Christians; and even in those Points which are controverted between different Parties, I shall ordinarily think it enough to hint at some of those Texts and Arguments which are us'd on either side; of which I can scarce suppose any Man to be ignorant that is but moderately acquainted with the Principles of Christianity, and the several Parties that profess it.

III. To

known
is wh
Thing
tain th
(Part
nation
those
must n
in wh
ceiv'd
invinci
of Cap
Means
But fo
Capaci
thro' l
rance
me is
those
require
Knowl
IV.
ciently
Reason
to com

III. *To believe what God makes known, and to do what he commands, is what all Men call Religion : But Things that are impossible, 'tis certain that God requires from no Man. (Part I. § 14.) When therefore Damnation is denounc'd in Scripture against those who receive not the Gospel, it must needs be understood only of them in whose Power it was to have receiv'd it; and not of such who are invincibly ignorant; either for want of Capacity, John ix. 41. or of the Means of Knowledge, John xv. 22. But for a Man who has both the Capacity and Means of Knowledge, thro' Negligence to continue in Ignorance of God's Will, my Reason tells me is a very great Sin; besides all those Places of Scripture which do require us diligently to seek after Knowledge.*

IV. *That there is a God, is sufficiently to be prov'd from our own Reason and Observation : But fully to comprehend his Nature, or declare*

in all Points what he is, *is by all allow'd to be impossible to us.*

V. That *God never had a Beginning*, I think I have sufficiently concluded (*Part I. § 6.*) And if the Holy Scripture had not told me, that he is from Everlasting to Everlasting, yet my own Reason would have inferred that *he is subject to no Decay, nor ever shall have an Ending.*

VI. The Nature of every material Being seems necessarily to imply a Possibility of having its Parts disjoint'd, and separated one from another; and consequently, of being dissolv'd and destroy'd: And therefore I conclude, that the eternal *God does not consist of Matter*; and that Being which is intelligent, and does not consist of any material Parts, I call a Spirit: And this is what I mean, when I say that *God is a Spirit*. As for those Expressions, the *Eyes of the Lord*, the *Arm of the Lord*, and such like, which do occur sometimes in Scripture,

Part I.
pture,
it is ma
be pur
VII
ciently
fible t
therefo
ter, I c
mortal
ly decla
Texts
has bee
of nece
way,
appearin
manner
of God
ance,
upon h
and ex
that th
present
Or, 4.
roglyph
God h
make c

pture, and seem to imply Bodily Parts, it is manifestly obvious, that they must be purely metaphorical.

VII. Our Experience does sufficiently testify, that whatsoever is visible to us is ever Material. Since therefore *God* does not consist of Matter, I conclude, that he is *invisible to mortal Eyes*, as the Scripture positively declares him to be. And all those Texts which seem to say, that he has been seen by Man, I think, must of necessity be interpreted some other way, *viz.* either, 1. Of an Angel appearing in a glorious and majestick manner: Or, 2. Of the eternal Son of God assuming a Bodily Appearance, as after he took our Nature upon him: Or, 3. Of some visible and extraordinary Signs and Tokens, that the invisible God was there present in an extraordinary manner: Or, 4. Of those mystical and hieroglyphical Representations which God has sometimes been pleas'd to make of himself, not to the Senses,

but to the Imagination and Understanding of his Prophets, in their extatick Dreams and Visions.

VIII. Amongst all those Things which I can conceive possible to be done, *i. e.* to imply no Contradiction, I can find nothing which to me appears more difficult, than what God has already done in the Structure of the Universe : And therefore I conclude, that *God* can do whatsoever in itself is possible to be done, which is what I mean when I say, that *he is Almighty* : Nor is there any one, sure, who will venture to say, that *God* can do such Things as imply a Contradiction, either in themselves, or to his own Nature and Attributes.

IX. That God, who made all Things, should be ignorant of any thing, appears to me most absurd to imagine. But when I say, that *God is Omniscient* ; if there is any thing, the Knowledge of which would manifestly imply a Contradiction, it could surely be no greater Irreverence to
say,

say, that God could not know, than that he could not do such a Thing. But whether the Knowledge of a future Contingent would imply a Contradiction or not, is a very abstruse and metaphysical Dispute; and except the contrary can very clearly be made appear, I know not how to imagine, that God is, or can be, ignorant of any thing past, present, or to come, however Contingent.

X. If God were or could be confin'd to, or circumscrib'd in, any determinate Space or Place, it would be hard to conceive that his Knowledge and Power should be infinite, and extend to all Places. But I cannot suppose God to be present in all Places, after the same manner as the Air is every where present throughout its Region, or the Light throughout its Hemisphere, for that would imply local Extension; and consequently, that he were a material Being, contrary to what I have said, § 6. But that God can in an instant exert
his

his Power in any, or all Places, whenever he pleases, (as the Soul can on a sudden move the extremest Joint of the Body) is, I think, an evident Consequence of his Omnipotence; and that manner of Existence whereby he is able to do this, I call *Omnipresence*; and this is all that I am able to conceive, when I say, that *God is every where present*.

XI. That *God is most wise*, that is to say, most perfectly knows what is always fittest and best to be done, and which is the properest Way to bring what he pleases to pass, is an evident Consequence from his Omniscience, or rather indeed a Branch of it.

XII. From God's Wisdom it necessarily follows, that his *Counsel is unchangeable*. For he who alters or repents of any thing, which he has once positively determin'd, plainly shews his Foresight to be imperfect, and his Wisdom defective. When therefore we meet with some Passages
in

Part I

in Scri
that C
yet af
of ne
to hav
condit
ny Ca
it is
when
some
have
needs
taphor
those
kind;
are or
ascrib'd
no fu
he has
Men.

XII

myself
what
own A
this I
fection

in Scripture, which seem to suggest that God has decreed one Thing, and yet afterwards done another; we must of necessity understand such Decrees to have been not absolute, but merely conditional (a Condition being in many Cases imply'd and suppos'd, where it is not in Words express'd.) And when he is said to have repented of some Things which he has done, or to have been griev'd thereat, we must needs interpret such Places in a metaphorical Sense, with an Allusion to those Motions and Passions in Mankind; just as *Hands, Arms, Eyes, &c.* are on the same account sometimes ascrib'd unto him, tho' really he has no such Members, no more than he has the Passions which belong to Men.

XIII. I do most evidently find in myself a Power to chuse at all times what I please, and to determine my own Actions as I will myself: And this I look upon to be a greater Perfection in me than if I were absolutely

solutely necessitated and determin'd by somewhat without myself, in every thing which I should do. Since therefore I derive this Perfection originally from God, who is the Contriver and Author of my Being, (*Part I. § 7.*) I cannot but ascribe the same in the highest degree to him, who must be the Fountain of all Perfection. And therefore I most readily believe, that *God is a free Agent*; and worketh all Things after the Counsel of his own Will.

XIV. How Justice, in a strict Sense, is to be ascrib'd unto God, who owes nothing to any one, and has a supreme and most absolute Dominion over all Things, as having made them purely at the Motion of his own Will, I look upon to be a nice and useless Disquisition: But the common Rules of Justice, which Men are obliged to observe one to another, to me do appear to be so very reasonable, that I cannot apprehend why any one of Knowledge and Understanding should

Part
shou
there
vance
sure,
which
in G
God
comm
as far
XV
no less
stice,
And f
Shado
declare
cannot
in all t
XV
Creatu
they b
dience
ceived
is alwa
(especi
ceeded
ty) upo

should ever vary from them, except thereby he might propose either to advance his Interest, compass his Pleasure, or wreak his Malice; neither of which I can imagine to have any Place in God. I therefore conclude, that *God is Just*, even according to the common Rules of Justice and Equity, as far as they can be applied to him.

XV. Veracity to me appears to be no less agreeable to Reason than Justice, if it be not rather a Part of it: And since I am able to imagine no Shadow of a Reason why God should declare any thing which were false; I cannot but believe that *he is most true* in all that he says.

XVI. That God should hate those Creatures which he has made (except they by their evil Actions and Disobedience do deserve it) is not to be conceived: And as he who loves another is always ready to pardon his Faults (especially if they have any way proceeded only from Frailty and Infirmitie) upon his true and sincere Repentance;

tance; so if the Person beloved continues obstinate or incorrigible in his Transgressions, he, with all the Reason that can be, forfeits that Love which he once enjoyed, and justly incurs such Penalty as may be suitable unto the Obligations which he has broken, and the Quality of the Person he has offended. I therefore conclude, That *God has originally a Love for all Mankind*, and that he *will be always merciful unto such Sinners as are truly penitent; but strict and severe in the Punishment of those who go on in the Breach of his Laws without Repentance.*

XVII. *Nor are those Calamities which so often follow us in this Life, or God's visiting the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children*, (which can be understood only of temporal Afflictions) *or his punishing the Wicked with extream and everlasting Misery, any manner of Derogation, either to his Justice, or his Love and Mercy towards Mankind*, since temporal Afflictions

fiction
Effect

to wear
and F

us mo
Damn

Warni
avoid i

be thr
little)

of Sin

XV

are ete

is to fa

imparti

him fro

ence, t

like) a

hereunt

eternall

sufficien

Beings,

son and

versally

Things

and to

afflictions may well be looked on as the Effects of his Love, as being designed to wean and purge us from the Love and Filth of this World, and to make us more fit for Heaven; and eternal Damnation (of which we have fair Warning given us, and may therefore avoid it if we please) is as little as can be threatened (and often is but too little) to keep us back from all manner of Sin and Wickedness.

XVIII. That some sort of Actions are eternally and essentially good, that is to say, to be approved of by every impartial rational Being, (*e.g.* to love him from whom we derive our Existence, to perform our Promise, and such like) and that the contrary Actions hereunto are therefore essentially and eternally evil, is to me from hence sufficiently evinced, because that if all Beings, which are endowed with Reason and Understanding, should universally set themselves to do those Things which now are accounted evil, and to omit those Things which now are

are esteemed good; the Consequence of this must necessarily be universal Confusion and Misery. Now, that God loves and approves of all Actions that are good, does evidently appear, because such Actions do tend to the general Happiness of his Creatures, whom he loves; (§ 16.) and for the contrary Reason it will follow, that he hates and abhors all Actions that are evil. And this is what I mean, when I say, *That God is most Holy.*

XIX. All possible Excellency or Perfection that I can conceive, is reducible unto these five Heads, *viz.*

1. Perfection of Being, which consists in perpetual Duration, without any Decay or Infirmary.
2. Perfection of Understanding, which consists in such Knowledge and Wisdom as is free from all Mistake or Ignorance.
3. Perfection of the Will, which consists in a free Liberty to chuse or refuse without any Constraint, or fatal Necessity.
4. Perfection of Power, which consists in an Ability to do every Thing.

Thing. And 5. Moral Perfection, which consists in an inflexible Resolution always to do and encourage that which is morally good, and to avoid and discourage whatsoever is morally evil. Now, since all these Perfections are in God in the most absolute manner; as I think I have shewn in the foregoing Paragraphs, from hence it will follow, That *God is most absolutely perfect.*

XX. And since he who is absolutely perfect can stand in need of nothing; it must also follow, that *God is most perfectly happy in Himself.*

XXI. As my Reason does evidently demonstrate unto me the Being of a God, so does it not in the least suggest to me any Argument to conclude, that *there is any more but One God*: And it is absurd and unreasonable to multiply Beings without any Ground or Reason for it.

XXII. That there is a real, and not only a nominal Distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost

Ghost or Spirit; that they are frequently spoken of in the Holy Scriptures in such Terms as we ordinarily use when we speak of Three Persons (altho' sometimes this Expression, Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit, may be put to signify not so much the Person, as the Power, Effect, or Energy of God's Spirit :) that altho' the Son be often spoken of as really and truly a Man, yet many Things are said of him, which cannot agree to a mere Man, or to any created Being whatsoever; and that there are such Things also spoken of the Holy Ghost, as cannot be accommodated unto a Creature: Moreover, that the Son derives his Being from, and always depends upon the Father, as the Holy Ghost does from, and upon the Father and the Son: All these Things, I say, in my Opinion, are not to be denied by any one who will but interpret the Holy Scriptures according to the ordinary Sense and Signification of the Words thereof, and not according to his

his o
Opinio
clearly
Texts
Zeal t
against
Passage
what
their I
to be l
manner
own ac
last Pa
but als
irrecon
Context
Concept
upon t
here h
ter so
Senses,
a more
Distinct
Holy G
sons; a
Title to

his own Prejudices or preconceived Opinions. And altho' the *Socinians* do clearly enough expound some of those Texts of Scripture, which, with more Zeal than Reason, are sometimes urged against them; yet, as to the principal Passages, which are alledged to prove what I have now asserted, I think their Interpretation of them not only to be harsh and strained, (which in a manner is acknowledged even by their own acute and brief Historian, in the last Paragraph of his second Letter) but also, many times, to be utterly irreconcilable unto the Words and Context. And now, (to explain those Conceptions which arise in my Mind upon the Consideration of the Texts here hinted at, as well as, in a Matter so abstruse and remote from my Senses, I am able) since I cannot find a more proper Term to express the Distinction of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost* by, I call them *Three Persons*; and, not knowing what other Title to give a Divine Person who is
no

no Creature, *I call each Person God: But I give the Title of God in a more emphatical manner unto the Father than unto the Son or Holy Ghost*, because the Father depends on none, but they do depend on him: And, since both my Reason and the Holy Scriptures do teach me to own no more than One God, I am of necessity compelled to say, that *these Three are so united together*, (tho' in such a manner as is above my Understanding) *as to be but One God*. And altho' it argues a great deal of Imperfection in human Speech, that, for want of other fit and proper Terms, we are forced to give the same Appellation to each Person singly, and to the Three conjointly; yet this does not imply any manner of Contradiction, as some do object; because, when we apply the Word *God* to one single Person, it has not the same *exact* and *adequate* Signification, as when we ascribe it unto the Three Persons conjointly (for that would imply that each single Per-
son

Part I
son w
Person
stinctio
do so
tween
Differen
Word
those C
do bring
Trinity
better
which
Three
they are
For Un
one do
denomin
because
begotten
seed, or
fore ma
out pret
between
And alth
being ea
must ne

son were, at the same time, the Three Persons; and so confound that Distinction which the Holy Scriptures do so often and apparently make between them: And this analogical Difference, in the signification of the Word *God*, will easily solve most of those Objections which the *Socinians* do bring against the Doctrine of the Trinity. And because I know no better Word to express that Unity which I apprehend to be between the *Three Persons*; I therefore say, that they are *One in Essence* or Substance. For Unity of Concord or Consent alone does not seem enough to me to denominate them to be One God. And because I find that *the Son is said to be begotten, and the Holy Ghost to proceed*, or be sent or emitted; I therefore make use of these Terms, without pretending to assign the difference between Generation and Procession: And altho' *the Son and the Holy Ghost*, being each of them God, are, and must needs be, *of the same Nature*,
F and

and, upon that account, *equal with the Father*; yet it is manifest that this Equality must be understood with an Allowance for the absolute Independence of the Father, and the Dependence of the Son and Holy Ghost upon Him.

XXIII. All the Objections that I can remember to be made against the Doctrine of the Trinity thus stated, I think, are easie enough to be solved by what I have now said, excepting Two, which must be particularly answered. The first is taken from *John x. 33, &c.* But tho' our Saviour did not here assert his Divinity, when there seemed to be occasion for it, yet it will not follow, that therefore he is not God; Especially if we consider, that it was not always his Custom to give full and compleat Answers unto such captious Questions and Objections as were put to him. But sometimes he contented himself only with shewing the Unreasonableness of those that proposed them; or

which

which we have one Instance *Mat. xxi. 23, &c.* and another *John viii. 3 &c.* and, as some think, another, *Mat. xxii. 17, &c.* And we may as well conclude, that he had no Authority for what he did, because he did not declare it when the Chief Priests and Elders questioned it; *Matt. xxi. 23.* as deny his Divinity, because he did not expressly maintain it, when on that account he was charged with Blasphemy. The other Objection is drawn from *Mark xiii. 32.* But to it I answer, That our Saviour's Design, in that Place, being only to represent the Day there spoken of, as a Secret not to be made known unto Men until it should come upon them; that they might always stand upon their Guard, watch and prepare for it: Let but the Word *now* be taken to signify *make known* which fully answers the Design of the Place, and, as it is evident, St. Paul uses the same Word, *1 Cor. ii. I determined*, says he, *not to know*, that is, not to make known or teach,

F 2

any

any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified: And then the most natural Paraphrase of that Place will be this, *But that Day and Hour there is no one who shall or can make known unto you; no not the Angels which are in Heaven; (who may be supposed to be ignorant of it themselves) nor even the Son himself (who altho' he knoweth all things, John xxi. 17. yet can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do, John v. 19. And who speaketh not of himself, but the Father which sent him gave him commandment what he should say, John xii. 49.) But the Father only shall in his own time, make it known by bringing it to pass.* And this Exposition of this Place of Scripture (which is the only Text that seems to press very hard upon us in this Controversy) I am sure is much more easy and natural, than many of those Interpretations which the Socinians do advance of the principal Passages which we urge against them. But if any one

shall

Part
shall
conce
scure
and t
to rec
Doctr
tion o
Obscu
that i
this L
prophe
a Gla
Marg
the C
to Ch
of it
And a
Reade
Part
XX
visible
co-exi
was p
there
signed
ing ab

I shall tell me, that this whole Matter concerning the Trinity, is very obscure and difficult to be apprehended; and therefore that it is unreasonable to require the explicit Belief of such Doctrine, as necessary either to Salvation or Church-communion: As to the Obscurity, it is not to be expected that it should be otherwise, since, in this Life, *we know, but in part, and propheſie in part, and ſee but through a Glaſs darkly, or in a Riddle*, as the Margin has it Word for Word from the Original, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. As to Church-communion, I ſhall ſpeak of it hereafter in its proper Place: And as touching Salvation, I refer my Reader to what I have ſaid, § 3. and Part I. § 14, and § 26.

XXIV. Either the Matter of this viſible World did from all Eternity co-exiſt together with God, or elſe it was produced from Nothing by him, there being no Third Way to be aſſigned: Now, both theſe Ways being above, tho' neither of them con-

trary to my Reason; my Reason alone can never solidly determine which of them is the right. But the latter of these making most, in my Opinion, for the Honour of God (of whom, as being the most perfect Being, I think I ought to entertain the most glorious Thoughts that possibly I can;) and the Holy Scriptures so often ascribing Eternity without Beginning unto God, in an emphatical manner, as his alone peculiar Attribute; I am thereby brought to believe, that *the Matter of this World is not eternal, but was at first created by God from Nothing; and consequently, that God can again annihilate it, or any Part of it, if it should so please him.*

XXV. That God did contrive, frame, and fashion this World, and every Part of it, and also that he still preserves and governs it by his Providence, I have formerly concluded, Part I. § 7. and § 10. And tho' every ignorant Person is not able to dive into, and fathom the Counsels of a great and

and Sovereign Prince; yet this is no Argument that he does not manage and rule his Dominions with due Care and Wisdom: Nor could the Making, nor can the Government of the World be any manner of Trouble to God (as the *Epicureans* objected) since he is absolutely Omnipotent, and needs no more but to speak the Word and the thing is done.

XXVI. It is very evident, that the Heathen World it self was generally and strongly addicted to the Belief of certain Beings (some good and some evil) superiour in Nature to Man, but subject to, and Ministers of the Will and Pleasure of the supreme God. But the Holy Scriptures do give us a more full and perfect Account of this Matter, *viz.* that *God created certain Spiritual Beings, called Angels*; that is to say, Messengers, as being sent forth by him to execute his Will upon all Occasions that he thinks fit, and particularly to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation (not that

God has any need of their Assistance or Ministry, any more than he has of the Worship and Service of Man; but only thought fit to create them of his own good Will and Pleasure; and probably that they, as well as Man, might be Objects for him to exercise his Goodness and Beneficence upon.) But whether every particular Person, State, and Kingdom have their proper Guardian Angels appointed them by God, is not, as I can find upon any sure Grounds to be determined. *But we are farther inform'd, that of these Angels some sinned, and therefore kept not their first Estate, but were cast down into Hell, and delivered into Chains of Darkness, to be reserved unto Judgment; the Chief, or Prince of whom is called the Devil, the great Dragon, the old Serpent, and Satan, and is, together with his Angels, permitted by God to range to and fro in the Earth, to tempt even the Godly, but to prevail and work in the Children of Disobedience.*

XXVII. That an eternal Succession of Men, or any other Beings, without a Beginning, is absolutely impossible, I have, I think, with Reason, already said, *Part I. § 6.* That Man at first was not fashioned by any blind and undesign'd Chance, is to me very evident, as well from the wonderful Frame of his Mind, as from the great Variety, Regularity, and Usefulness of all the Parts of his Body, and particularly his Organs of Sensation: And that he did not at first spring up out of the Earth by any Force of Nature, distinct from the Power of God, I think, needs no Proof, because the contrary Supposition is not only without any Ground of Evidence, but also liable to so many monstrous Improbabilities as do render it highly extravagant to imagine. I therefore must conclude, That (at the least) *the first Male and Female of Mankind were immediately framed and fashioned by God: and that all the rest of them were and are derived from those two*

by the way of natural Generation (Christ Jesus excepted, who, tho' born of a Woman, was not begotten of a Man) is the plain Voice of the Holy Scripture.

XXVIII. That Man, tho' made a little lower than the Angels, is yet by Nature far more excellent than any other living Creature, is sufficiently apparent. The Holy Scripture tells us, that God made Man after his own Image: But this Expression cannot be understood with respect to the Shape and Structure of the Human Body (God being both incorporeal and invisible) but is, as I apprehend it, to be interpreted altogether with relation to those Faculties which are implanted in the Mind of Man, and that internal Uprightness in which he was at first created; which do carry in them an evident Similitude and Analogy unto some of those Attributes and Perfections which are in God himself. That *the Body of Man is made originally of the Earth*, by which it is nourished,

nourished, and into which it is again resolved, is obvious to be collected from Reason: And if I had never been told, that *God breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life, whereby he became a living Soul*, yet those Powers and Faculties which I find in myself, of Thinking, Judging, Drawing Consequences (and those sometimes in a very long Train) reflecting back upon my own Thoughts, and determining my own Actions as I please, together with that inward Satisfaction which I reap from doing what is morally good, tho' naturally, and to my Body painful and uneasy; and the Trouble which I find upon the doing of any thing which is morally evil, tho' otherwise never so pleasant and delightful, would, I think, have sufficiently taught and assured me, that there is a Principle within me, which, tho' united to my Body (and thereby affected with its Delights or Pains) yet is really distinct from it, and of a different Nature, and more

noble Original, which I call my Soul.

XXIX. That God, who has originally a Love for all Mankind, § 16. should have created any Man with an Intent to make him eternally and unavoidably miserable, is to me a Contradiction: And since, on the contrary, he has naturally implanted in every Man a vehement and unextinguishable desire of being Happy, and of always remaining so, I cannot but conclude, that *God intended Man at his first Creation unto eternal Happiness.* For that he should implant the Seed and Principle of such a Desire in us all, which never fails to spring forth and shew itself in every Man who comes to Years of Knowledge; and this to be only a Torment to us, without any possibility either of suppressing or satisfying it; is, I think, not to be conceived, except we should suppose that at the first he made us to be Objects, not of his Love, but Hatred.

XXX.

XXX. As even by the Ruins of a noble Structure we may be able to give a Guess how goodly the Building was at its first Erection ; so when I at present consider how distorted the Nature of Man is (his Lusts and Passions always struggling with, and often getting the Victory over his Reason, which evidently was designed for the superiour Faculty) my own Understanding alone methinks suggests to me, that *Man was at first created in a more perfect and upright State and Condition than what he is at present : But* how our Nature was so far perverted, as that all our Reason and Endeavours cannot again reduce it to that firm and perfect Regularity, in which we are sensible it ought to be, and therefore have cause to believe, that it was at first framed by God, is what of our selves we never could have collected from any Suggestions of our own Understanding.

XXXI. Whether the second and third Chapters of the Book of *Genesis* are

are all to be understood literally, or whether an allegorical Interpretation is in some parts to be admitted, I think myself not much concerned to debate. But, which way soever we take, the plain Result will be, that whereas God placed our first Parents at their Creation, in a State both of Innocency and Happiness; they, by transgressing his Law, and thereby incurring his Displeasure, fell both from the one and the other. Now, that they by their Sin, might deprave their own Natures, and vitiate their Constitutions, is no way irrational to suppose: And that from the depraved Nature and vitiated Constitution of Parents, divers inconveniences may be entailed upon their Posterity (who derive not only their bodily Temper and Complexion, but frequently also their Passions and Inclinations from those of their Parents) is what common Experience does daily testify. When therefore *the Holy Scripture assigns the Sin of our first Parents, as the Cause of the Corruption*

ruption of the Nature of Mankind, I see nothing therein which it not very reasonable to be allowed.

XXXII. He who grants a Favour to another, barely, and only of his own free Will and Pleasure, may, without any violation of Justice, whenever he pleases, withdraw that, which he is under no Obligation to continue any longer than he thinks fit. Nor is it any way to be reckoned as unmerciful or cruel, to cease the Continuance of a purely voluntary Kindness, if the stopping of it does not render the Person actually miserable, without any Fault committed by him. If therefore God had thought fit, even for no other Reason but his own Pleasure, to divert the stream of his Kindness from Man; and that altho' he had continued in a State of Innocency, provided he had not put him into a state of unavoidable Misery; who could have any just reason to complain, or find fault with him for doing what he should please with his own? Much more

more then will it follow that, If upon the occasion of our first Parents Transgression, and the Corruption of our Nature, which thereupon ensued, God had resolved to cut us all for ever off from the inheritance of those Blessings, to which Man was designed at his first Creation, but now rendred naturally unfit for, by this original pollution; even in this there had been nothing contrary to the strict Rules of Justice or Mercy; especially if we consider, that all the World have ever thought it reasonable that in some cases, Children should, on account of their Parents Faults, lose some Benefits and Advantages which otherwise they would have enjoyed. But actually to inflict a positive Punishment upon any one for a Fault which he never committed, nor any way voluntarily concurred to, nor was at all capable of hindering in him who committed it, being so directly contrary, not only unto Mercy, but also to the common Rules of Justice; I cannot but conclude,

Part
clude
on of
a just
had
ever
that
Cause
the T
other
Sins a
XX
of our
inclin
immo
consta
have
and F
good,
the W
ny bra
other
writte
gestion
ing, y
of the
Law o

clude, that *tho' the original Corruption of our Nature may be reckoned as a just Occasion, why God might, if he had pleased, have excluded us all for ever from the Joys of Heaven; yet that alone is not to be assigned as a Cause why he will doom any Man to the Torments of Hell, who does not otherwise deserve it by his own actual Sins and Transgressions.*

XXXIII. That by the Corruption of our Nature we are all of us mightily inclined to things that are evil and immoral, is most evident from our constant Experience: But that we have not thereby lost all Knowledge and Power of doing that which is good, I think is no less apparent from the Writings and Examples of so many brave Heathens; who having no other divine Law but that which was written in their Hearts by the Suggestions of their natural Understanding, yet both taught and did so many of the things contained in the written Law of God. But curiously to distinguish

stinguish and assign the Bounds between Nature and Grace (which are both the Gifts of God; the one in an ordinary, the other in an extraordinary way) and to pretend to shew how far we may go by the bare Strength of Nature, and where it is that we just stand in need of supernatural Assistance, I look upon to be a work of very little Use or Benefit; but of extraordinary Difficulty, and perhaps impossible for any but God himself, to perform. Moreover how God will deal with those who have no other Guide to follow but the Light of Nature; how far he will punish their Sins, be merciful to their Ignorance or Infirmities, or reward their Endeavours to do good, is a Secret of which we are no way able to give any particular account. But it may suffice us to know, that the Generation of *Man-kind, by reason of the Corruption of their Nature being apparently in a worse condition in respect of eternal Salvation, than what they otherwise*
would

would have been: God was pleased to determine that he would not deal with them according to that absolute Sovereignty which he had over them, nor according to the strict and rigorous Rules of Justice which might have justified the greatest Severities; but according to the Inclinations of his Mercy and Loving kindness. Of which way of God's proceeding with us, I come now to give an Account.

XXXIV. That God might, if he had pleased, without the Violation of any of his Attributes, have freely forgiven all the Sins of Mankind, and even restored our Nature again to its primitive Integrity and Uprightness, seems naturally to follow, both from the Absoluteness of his Authority, and the Almightyness of his Power: And even the strictest Justice, tho' it fully allows, yet does not compel any one to exact a Debt where he is the only Creditor, or a Punishment where he is the only Party injured or offended. But if God has thought fit to deal

deal after another manner with us; and rather offers to help our Infirmities, as Occasion requires, than wholly to repair our perverted Nature; and chuses to have an Expiation made for our Sins, rather than to remit them without any such Consideration; altho' his Will and Pleasure is enough to silence all our Exceptions, and justify his Proceedings, yet may there some probable Considerations be urg'd in order to make us clearly apprehend the Wisdom of God, in the Fitness and Reasonableness of this his Dispensation: As namely, that hereby we are or ought to be made more continually sensible of our constant Dependence upon him, of his great Mercy and Compassion for us, and his perfect Hatred and Abhorrence of Sin.

XXXV. It cannot, I think, be doubted, but that at the very time of the Fall of Man, God, who is infinitely Wise and Knowing, and therefore stands in need of no time to deliberate,

liberate, had fully determin'd what he would do in order to the Expiation of our Sins, and the helping of our corrupted nature, so as that we might be again in some Capacity of recovering that Happiness to which we were at first design'd, § 29. And that this Work of our *Redemption* was to be perform'd by the Means and Mediation of an extraordinary Person, who was to be sent into the World under the title of the Messiah, or the *Christ*, is abundantly evident both from the Old and New Testament; especially if we compare them and expound them one by another. But it is certain that *Christ* did not immediately come into the World; nor was there any one for some Thousands of Years after the Fall, who so much as pretended to that Title or Office; whether it were that God thought it fit, by some previous Dispensations, to prepare the Minds of Men for the Reception of so extraordinary a Person,

deal after another manner with us; and rather offers to help our Infirmities, as Occasion requires, than wholly to repair our perverted Nature; and chuses to have an Expiation made for our Sins, rather than to remit them without any such Consideration; altho' his Will and Pleasure is enough to silence all our Exceptions, and justify his Proceedings, yet may there some probable Considerations be urg'd in order to make us clearly apprehend the Wisdom of God, in the Fitness and Reasonableness of this his Dispensation: As namely, that hereby we are or ought to be made more continually sensible of our constant Dependence upon him, of his great Mercy and Compassion for us, and his perfect Hatred and Abhorrence of Sin.

XXXV. It cannot, I think, be doubted, but that at the very time of the Fall of Man, God, who is infinitely Wise and Knowing, and therefore stands in need of no time to deliberate,

liberate, had fully determin'd what he would do in order to the Expiation of our Sins, and the helping of our corrupted nature, so as that we might be again in some Capacity of recovering that Happiness to which we were at first design'd, § 29. And that this Work of *our Redemption* was to be perform'd by the Means and Mediation of an extraordinary Person, who was to be sent into the World under the title of the Messiah, or the *Christ*, is abundantly evident both from the Old and New Testament; especially if we compare them and expound them one by another. But it is certain that *Christ* did not immediately come into the World; nor was there any one for some Thousands of Years after the Fall, who so much as pretended to that Title or Office; whether it were that God thought it fit, by some previous Dispensations, to prepare the Minds of Men for the Reception of so extraordinary a Person,

son, or for what other reason, I pretend not to determine; but think myself oblig'd intirely to submit to the Wisdom of God, who thought fit so to order it, that the Messiah should not appear until that Fulness of Time which he had appointed for it. In the mean while, although the great Light was not yet to come into the World, yet God suffer'd it not to be wholly overspread with Darknes: But besides the Light of the visible Creation, which declares the Glory and eternal Power of God; and besides the natural Light which arises in every Man's Understanding, whereby they who have no other Law, are a Law unto themselves, unto which their own Conscience is a Witness beyond exception; God was pleas'd in a supernatural way to reveal himself unto divers Persons (to the intent that they might teach the Knowledge of him to others) as to *Enoch, Noah, Melchizedeck, Job*, and probably to many more than we read of,

(amongst whom, why *Balaam* should not be reckon'd, I can see no reason; altho' Covetousness and the Hopes of worldly Advancement tempted him to make but an ill use of the good Gifts of God) and also to chuse out unto himself a peculiar People, namely, that of *Israel*, and to vouchsafe unto them a more than ordinary Knowledge of Himself and his Laws, by his Servants *Moses* and the Prophets: And lastly, by his Providence to order the Matter so, that the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets should many Years before *Christ's* coming, be translated into the *Greek* Tongue, which was then the most universal Language, that by them all Nations might have the more Instruction, and so be the better prepared to receive the Messiah, whenever he should be made known unto them. And for this reason also it seems to be, that God so long before the *Mosaic* Law, ordain'd and appointed the sacrificing of Beasts; whereby it became the common

common Practice of the *Gentiles*, as well as *Jews*: Not that he had any Esteem or Value for the Blood of Bulls or of Goats; but only that by this Practice the Minds of Men might be the more easily and readily dispos'd to own and rely upon that great Sacrifice which *Christ* was one Day to make of Himself for them.

XXXVI. There are several Prophecies dispers'd up and down thro' the Old Testament, plainly design'd to foretel the Coming of the *Christ* or Messiah, what sort of Person he should be, and what he should do and suffer: As that he should be the Seed of the Woman, of the Progeny of *Abraham*, of the Family and Lineage of *David*, born in *Bethlehem*, and born of a Virgin: That he should come into the World about the time that the Sceptre and the Law-giver, that is to say, the Force and Power of civil Authority, should cease from the Tribe of *Judah*, and should finish his Work in the Compass of the last
seven

seven Years of those four hundred and ninety, which are pointed out by the Prophet *Daniel*; that by many he should be despis'd and rejected, should be a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs, be oppress'd and afflicted, yet bear it most patiently, and at last be wounded and cut off, not for himself, but for our Transgressions. And yet for all this he is foretold to be a Person wonderful, a Counsellor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, of the Increase of whose Government there should be no End, and unto whom the Gathering of the Nations should be. Now, altho' there may some Difficulties be started, as to the Interpretation of some of those, and such like Prophecies, which do occur in the Old Testament, (which is no great wonder, considering how the *Jews*, who are Enemies to Christianity, have endeavour'd to obscure and perplex them) yet if we do consider that there is evidently a fair, consonant

G

and

and reasonable Application of all these Predictions to be made unto *Jesus of Nazareth*, and that there is not, nor ever was any other Person to whom they could be apply'd, besides himself; and since it is not possible for any one, but God, to foretel a Thing with so many Circumstances so long before it comes to pass, I think I may very well from hence conclude, not only against the *Jews*, who acknowledge, but also against all others, who may perhaps at first deny, the Authority of the Old Testament, that *Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ or Messiah*, whom God had promis'd to send into the World: And if to this we add the Greatness of his Miracles, and the transcendent Goodness of his Doctrine, (of which see *Part I. § 19.*) I think the Argument will have the Force of a Demonstration.

XXXVII. In the holy Scriptures I find such Things spoken of *Christ* as do plainly shew him to have been a true and real Man; in all Things like

unto

unto us, Sin only excepted : Other Expressions also I find frequently apply'd to him, which cannot possibly agree to any Man or created Being whatsoever, but only unto God ; as I have already said, § 22. And altho' there is a plain Distinction made between his Divine and Human Nature, yet is he always spoken of but as one Person. Here then I know not better how to express my Sentiments, than by saying, that in the one and single Person of *Christ*, there is a Conjunction of both the Divine and Human Nature, and consequently, that *Christ* is really and truly *both God and Man*. And if the same Objection be made against this Doctrine as is against that of the Trinity, viz. that it is very obscure and difficult to be apprehended ; I shall also return the same Answer, as I have already done to that in the latter End of § 23. to which I refer my Reader.

XXXVIII. He who acknowledges *Christ* to be God, to be sure will allow of his eternal Existence, as to his Divine Nature : And, as to what concerns his Human Nature ; that *he was conceived by the Power of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary* ; and that, after some Years spent in preaching and doing Good, he was, thro' the Malice of the *Jews*, and at their vehement Desire, condemn'd by *Pilate* the Roman Governour to be *Crucified* ; which was accordingly done, and a Spear thrust into his Side ; That being *dead* he was *buried*, and lay in the Sepulchre unto the *third Day* ; upon which *he rose from the Dead*, and after several times conversing with his Disciples for the Space of forty Days, that he *was* visibly taken up from them, and *received into Heaven* unto infinite and eternal Glory, *where he is our perpetual Mediator and Intercessor at the Throne of God* : All this, I say, is so evidently, and without Contro-

verfy, t
Veracity
and rec
New T
have pr
no real
deny,
Part of
or two
whence
fore his
Hell, y
I think
ther by
State of
the Dar
cation b
and Pur
thither.
that it
there ;
Intimat
of any
did or v
ding of
Life up

verfy, testify'd by his Disciples (whose Veracity I have asserted, *Part I.* § 19.) and recorded in the Scriptures of the New Testament, (whose Authority I have proved, *Part I.* § 23, &c.) that no reasonable Man, I think, can now deny, or so much as doubt of any Part of it: And altho' there are one or two Passages of Scripture, from whence it is inferr'd, that *Christ* before his Resurrection did *descend into Hell*, yet will I not venture, nor do I think it necessary to determine whether by the Word *Hell* is meant the State of the Dead only, or the Place of the Damned; or (if the latter Signification be to be chosen) for what End and Purpose it was that he descended thither. Only I conclude certainly, that it was not to suffer any thing there; because I do not find the least Intimation throughout the Scripture, of any Suffering of *Christ*, which he did or was to endure, beyond the shedding of his Blood, and yielding up his Life upon the Cross.

XXXIX. What God might have done (had he so pleas'd) without any other Consideration, but only by virtue of his own absolute Authority; if he has rather chosen to do it for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, and in Consideration of that Obedience, which he perform'd, and those Sufferings which he underwent, who shall dare to find fault with him, or pretend to be wiser than he? Now that *it is for the sake of Christ, and of his Obedience and Sufferings, that God vouchsafes to us the Pardon of our Sins, and makes us the Offer of everlasting Happiness*, is so plainly declared in many Places of the Holy Scriptures, that nothing can be more. And since I find God's sending of *Christ* to be set forth as an Instance of his Love, not to some few particular Persons only, but even to the whole World; and since *Christ* is said to have died for all, and to have been a Propitiation for the Sins of the World, without any Exception; I cannot but conclude, that all

all Men shall be, be, the ferings, they ha that Ben And as the anci foresaw Share in wrought came in seems to Reason, never he yet for God; knows t all Hear if the K propos'd would l ted unto viour te Tyre an son he

all Men who ever were, or are, or shall be, might have been, or may be, the better for *Christ* and his Sufferings, if thro' their own Default they have not, or shall not, forfeit that Benefit which was design'd them. And as it is not disputed, but that the ancient Patriarchs, who by Faith foresaw the Coming of *Christ*, had a Share in that Redemption which he wrought, altho' they dy'd before he came into the World; so to me it seems to stand with a great deal of Reason, that even those Persons who never heard any thing of *Christ*, may yet for his sake find Mercy from God; because God, who perfectly knows the most secret Inclinations of all Hearts, may clearly foresee that if the Knowledge of *Christ* had been propos'd and offer'd unto them, they would have own'd him, and submitted unto his Gospel; which, our Saviour tells us, was the very Case of *Tyre* and *Sidon*; and for which Reason he declares, that they should re-

ceive a milder Doom than *Chorazin* and *Bethsaida* in the Day of Judgment, *Matt. xi. 21, 22.* And how far this may extend to all such as labour under very strong Prejudices, altho' not strictly invincible, I think that God is the only proper Judge.

XL. But however God may think fit to deal with those, who are either ignorant of, and strongly prejudiced against, the Christian Religion; yet the Manner of his proceeding with true Believers is plainly enough declar'd. All those who receive and own the Christian Faith, are not to be look'd upon as so many separate Persons; each of them believing such and such Doctrines; but are always represented in Scripture as join'd together in one Society- or Body, which is call'd the Church, of which *Christ Jesus* is the Chief or Head; and under an Obligation to live in Communion and Fellowship one with another, under those Laws and Constitutions which *Christ* has given them; but not, that
I can

I can
join with
Person,
the visible
Earth.
any such
Earth,
a Matte
great Pl
it would
with an
in it: V
those of
to prove
there m
Apostle
Pope or
Bishop
for of S
rick and
and pre
plex'd,
Protestan
my Opini
derstandi
prevail

I can find in Scripture, oblig'd to join with, or submit to, any one Person, as the Vicar of *Christ*, and the visible Head of the Church upon Earth. For if *Christ* had appointed any such Person as his Deputy upon Earth, he must either have declar'd a Matter of such Consequence with great Plainness and Evidence, or else it would be very hard to find fault with any Man for being mistaken in it: Whereas the Arguments which those of the Church of *Rome* bring to prove, either that such a Vicar there must be, or that St. *Peter* the Apostle was the Man, or that the Pope or Bishop of *Rome* (and not the Bishop of *Antioch*) is the Successor of St. *Peter*, both in his Bishoprick and Authority, are all so weak and precarious, so forc'd and perplex'd, and so fully confuted by the Protestant Divines; that nothing, in my Opinion, but Blindness of Understanding, or worldly Interest, can prevail with the Members of that

G 5

Church,

Church, still to insist upon them. Now, that *Christ* instituted but one Church, in which all true Believers and good Livers, are for ever to be compriz'd, is very plain. And altho' thro' the Mistakes and Perverseness of Man, this Church is rent and divided into opposite and contending Parts and Parties; yet this doth not hinder, but that, according to its true and primitive Constitution, it is, or ought to be one, (as a Kingdom or Commonwealth, by its Laws and Constitutions, is but one Society, altho' there may arise Factions and different Interests in it) nor shall any Man be esteemed as a Member of the Church before God, who is not ready and willing, according to the best of his Power and Knowledge, to maintain the Unity of it, and that upon those very Terms, and none other, which *Christ* has appointed, as near as possibly he can find and apprehend them. Moreover, that all the Laws and Constitutions on which *Christ* has founded

Part I
founde
he wor
ly agre
Moral
not be
therefo
Church
Membe
ties and
repent
Church
one of
Laws,
Out-law
his Part
long unt
before th
ple of
Favour
vileges a
of their
culiar Pe
Nations
Christ,
upon all
God's F

founded the Church, and by which he would have it regulated, are exactly agreeable unto the Rules of sound Morality, and the Will of God, cannot be so much as doubted; and therefore it is truly said, that *the Church is holy*, altho' every particular Member thereof has both his Frailties and his Sins; which yet he must repent of, and so become Holy as the Church is Holy, or else he violates one of the main and fundamental Laws, and so becomes as it were an Out-law of the Church, and forfeits his Part in all the Privileges that belong unto that Society. And whereas, before the Coming of *Christ*, the People of *Israel* did enjoy more of the Favour of God, and had greater Privileges and Advantages, on the score of their being God's chosen and peculiar People, than any, or all other Nations of the World; the Gospel of *Christ*, on the contrary, now looks upon all as equally entitled unto God's Favour, and the Advantages

G 6

thereon

thereon depending) who take care duly to qualify themselves for it. So that whereas formerly *the Church* (that is, the chosen People of *God*) might have been said to be particular, as being in a manner limited to one Nation or People; now, on the contrary, it is *Catholick*, that is to say, universal, as being no way confin'd to one Place or Nation; all People being equally chosen by God in *Christ*, who will receive and live according to the Gospel.

XLI. In those several Revelations which God was pleased to make of himself after the Fall of Man, unto *Adam*, to *Abraham*, and to the People of *Israel*, there was still a plain Intimation given them, that in the Time to come there should an extraordinary Person arise in the World, who should yet more clearly make known the Will of God to Mankind. But when *Christ*, who was That Person, did accordingly come, and send his Apostles to preach the Gospel over all

all the
them,
any oth
be exp
to und
Gospel
that De
make o
Mankin
and Di
therefor
me no r
petuity
fon wou
me con
dence v
the Chr
known
Salvatio
guished
to stan
tion to
there sh
pany o
to the V
the tru

all the Earth; he neither suggested to them, nor they unto the World, that any other Revelation was ever after to be expected; but always gave them to understand that God had in the Gospel compleated and finished all that Declaration which he intended to make of himself, or his Will, unto Mankind, until the general Judgment and Dissolution of the World. If therefore the holy Scripture had given me no manner of Assurance of the Perpetuity of the Church; my own Reason would have been enough to make me conclude, that God in his Providence will so order the Matter, as that *the Christian Religion*, being the only known and ordinary Means of eternal Salvation, *shall never be wholly extinguished* while the World lasts, so as to stand in need of any new Revelation to revive and restore it. But that there shall always be a certain Company of Men, evidently conspicuous to the World, teaching and professing the true Christian Religion, without

any Error or Corruption in Doctrine or Worship, is what I can no where find promised or foretold, either by Christ or any of his Apostles. On the contrary, there are several Passages in the New Testament, which do plainly seem to foretel, that, in Process of Time, most pernicious Doctrines and Practices should prevail and take place, even amongst the Generality of those who should profess themselves to be Disciples of Christ. And whosoever shall but lightly compare the State of Christianity for several Centuries before the Reformation, with that Draught of it, which is left us by Christ and his Apostles in the Holy Scriptures, must, if he be impartial, I think, be fully convinced of the Truth of those Predictions.

XLII. Whether or no *God* has, or does at any time communicate or bestow any extraordinary Grace or Assistance upon those, who are no visible Members of the Church, but altogether Strangers unto that Revelation which

which
Questi
heroic
thens
mine i
give so
every
of Chr
may (i
sufficie
nal Ha
those
their P
no Mar
general
which
Men,
Church
Jesus i
were no
this Na
this Gr
is in
Ministr
Ghost up
true Be

which he has made of himself, is a Question which the virtuous Lives and heroick Actions of some brave Heathens make it hard positively to determine in the negative. But that *he will give so much Grace and Strength to every one who shall become a Member of Christ's Church*, as that thereby they may (if the Fault be not their own) sufficiently qualify themselves for eternal Happiness, by the Performance of those Things which he requires on their Part to be done, is what I think no Man can doubt of, who does but in general consider the Mercy and Love which God designed, even unto all Men, but more especially unto the Church, in sending our Saviour *Christ Jesus* into the World; altho' there were not any particular Promises of this Nature in the Gospel: And that this *Grace and Ability to do good is in Scripture ascribed unto the Ministry and Influence of the Holy Ghost upon the Hearts and Minds of true Believers*, is plain and general-

ly owned by all Christians: But that this Influence of God's Spirit does not work so uncontrollably, but that it may be resisted, and even wholly rejected and lost, is, I think, sufficiently obvious, as well from Reason and Experience, as from those Passages of the Holy Scripture, wherein we are exhorted not to quench the Spirit, but to walk in, and be led by the Spirit, and the like; which were apparently needless, and to no purpose, if the Operations of the Holy Spirit upon our Hearts were so strong, as that we could not chuse but comply with them. Now, *the Things which God requires* to be performed *on our part*, in order to Life everlasting *are* apparent, and can be no more but to believe those Truths which he has made known, which is called *Faith*; and to observe those Precepts which he has commanded, which is called *Obedience*. And as I have already shewn, that these Things are required from no Man beyond the Measures

Part II.
fures of
does the
that Go
sufficient
and Fra
ness of
be merc
ordinary
forgive
ful Sins,
pentance
dience:
Holy Gh
lutely un
it needfu
ture and
refer my
mon of
bishop of
ject. Bu
that we
tion, wh
ly Scriptu
we shoul
on God's
hence to

tures of Possibility, *Part I. § 14.* So does the Scripture most fully assure us, that *God will* in them, make a very sufficient Allowance for the Ignorance and Frailty, and even for the Perverseness of our Nature, and will not only be merciful unto our Weaknesses and ordinary Failings, but will pardon and forgive even our greatest and most wilful Sins, upon our true and hearty Repentance, which is a Part of our Obedience: And as for the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which is said to be absolutely unpardonable, I do not think it needful to enquire here into the Nature and Consequence of it, but shall refer my Reader to that excellent Sermon of Dr. Tillotson, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, upon that Subject. But here it is highly necessary that we should all take that Caution, which both Reason and the Holy Scriptures do give us, *viz.* That we should not presume so much upon God's Mercy and Lenity, as from hence to take Occasion of going on in
our

our Wickedness : For Kindness thus abused will certainly turn into the highest Wrath, and much increase the Damnation of a Sinner.

XLIII. I am inclined to think, that those Arguments which are drawn from the Nature of the human Soul itself are not by themselves sufficient to prove that it is immortal ; but, on the contrary, that the eternal Duration of any created Being depends not so much upon its own Nature, as upon the Will of God who created it. But as Reason alone suggests unto us, that there is a Life to come after this, *Part I. § 13.* and that Man was at first designed by God unto Life eternal, (*Part II. § 29.*) so does the holy Scripture most clearly assure us, that *they who perform what God requires, shall be happy to all Eternity ; and they who do not so, shall be miserable without end.* The Reconcilableness of which with God's Justice and Mercy I have accounted for § 17. But wherein this Happiness of the Righteous shall consist,

fist, we
and wh
Wicke
Fire, o
only m
signify t
I think
But both
Places o
suggest,
good M
evil, sha
or less a
one anot
ness of th

XLIV
is suffici
Experien
Men im
tion from
State of
way con
Joy or M
me from
solved th
from our

list, we can but very imperfectly tell ; and whether the Punishment of the Wicked shall literally be in everlasting Fire, or whether that Expression be only made use of metaphorically, to signify the Greatness of the Torment, I think it not necessary to determine. But both my own Reason, and some Places of Scripture do seem strongly to suggest, that neither the Reward of good Men, nor the Punishment of the evil, shall be equal unto all ; but greater or less according as they have exceeded one another in the Holiness or Wickedness of their Lives.

XLIV. That all Men are mortal, is sufficiently testify'd by our daily Experience : But that the Souls of Men immediately upon their Separation from their Bodies, are not in a State of Insensibility ; but are straightway conveyed into a State, either of Joy or Misery, seems very apparent to me from St. *Paul's* Desire to be dissolved that he might be with *Christ* ; from our Saviour's Promise unto the Thief

Thief upon the Cross ; and from the Story or Parable of the rich Man and *Lazarus* ; as also from some other Intimations which the Holy Scripture gives us. But since *there is*, one day, *to be a general Judgment of all Mankind before the Tribunal of Christ*, where every Man must receive his Sentence for eternal, either Happiness or Misery (as the Holy Scripture does assure us) it seems not irrational to judge, that neither the Righteous nor the Wicked do receive their full and final Portion until that Judgment be passed upon them. I know not therefore how to condemn those who anciently took up the Custom of praying for their deceased Friends who had lived holily, and dy'd piously, that they might find Favour and Acceptance at the general Judgment, and have their Portion of Glory augmented : But I can by no Means approve of those, who upon such pitiful Suggestions have presum'd to determine, that there is such a Place

as

as Pur
are to
rary P
sion in
upon t
be a M
their ta
and rain
fund,
godly C
People.

that the
general
World,
Power o
whenever
dissolv'd
that it f
general
also the
surrectio
who hav
those w
whether
ticles of

as Purgatory, where the Souls of Men are to be purg'd and suffer a temporary Punishment before their Admission into Heaven. And altho' I look upon their praying for the Dead to be a Mistake, rather than a Sin, yet their taking of Money for so doing, and raising such a Revenue upon that fund, I look upon to be a most ungodly Cheat and Imposition upon the People.

XLV. Altho' I do not apprehend, that there is any natural Decay in the general Frame and Structure of this World, yet it is certain, that by the Power of God, who made it, it may, whenever he pleases, be destroyed and dissolv'd; and the Scripture assures us that it shall be so *at the Time of the general Judgment*; at which Time also *there shall be an universal Resurrection of the Bodies of all those who have died*, and a Change of those who shall be then alive. But whether all the same individual Particles of each Man's Body which have been
been

been laid down in the Earth, shall be rais'd and re-united again to their Souls, I look upon to be a needless Enquiry. What St. *Paul* says upon this Argument, 1 *Cor.* xv 35. does abundantly satisfy me; the Purport of whose Words I take to be this, *viz.* That God, who being the Author of Nature, has given such a vegetative Power to a Grain of Corn, that when it is thrown into the Ground, and there macerated and dissolv'd, it springs up again, and brings forth a Body suitable and proper to itself; that that same God, I say, both can and will, at the last Day, from the dead and dissolv'd Bodies of Men, raise up such Bodies as shall please himself. And as there is a continual and great Change of Particles in the human Body between the Birth and the Grave; so I see not what Absurdity would follow, if we should allow also that there is a like Change between the Grave and the Resurrection.

your'd
count
which
which
that I ha
is exactl
main D
and no
Princip
son. A
Speculat
ed into
ignorant
undeterm
ken; y
have her
virtuous
I hope t
who doe
of his
but will
But wh
stian Lif
Duties
all to p

XLVI. And thus I have endeavour'd to give a brief and plain Account of that Part of Christianity which is purely or chiefly doctrinal; which upon the most strict Search that I have been able to make, I think is exactly agreeable to the Tenour and main Design of the Holy Scriptures, and no way contradictory to the Principles of plain and sound Reason. And if in many other Points of Speculation, which by some are adopted into Religion, I am either wholly ignorant, or, perhaps, doubtful and undetermin'd, or, it may be, mistaken; yet, if to the Belief which I have here professed, I do superadd a virtuous and Christian Course of Life, I hope there is no moderate Christian, who does not in effect make it a Part of his Religion to be uncharitable, but will allow that I may be saved. But wherein this virtuous and Christian Life consists, and what are the Duties which the Gospel obliges us all to perform (whether they are the
Duties

Duties of pure Morality, as to love God and our Neighbour ; or those of positive Institution, as to be baptiz'd, to receive the Holy Communion, &c.) is to be the Subject of the Third and last Part of this small Work ; to which, therefore, I now proceed.



A GEN-

GENT

I. **A**

reducible
tain from
do that
his Abili
good, wh
able unto
and mut
Things,
approv'd
mal Bein
\$ 18.) fo
every M

A

GENTLEMAN's Religion.

PART III.

I. **A**LL the Commands of God,
and consequently *all the*
Duties of a Christian are
reducible to these two *viz.* To ab-
stain from that which is evil, and to
do that which is good, according to
his Ability. Those Actions I call
good, which either are eternally agree-
able unto the Nature, Circumstances,
and mutual Relations of Persons and
Things, and therefore for ever to be
 approv'd of by every impartial ratio-
nal Being (as I have said *Part II.*
§ 18.) for which we must appeal to
every Man's Reason (as we do to his
H Eyes,

Eyes, without any other Demonstration, to prove that the Sun shines) or else are expressly commanded by God, of his own positive Will and Pleasure (to whom, as being his Creatures, we all owe an entire Obedience) for which we must have our recourse to the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament only; all the positive Institutions and Ordinances of the *Mosaick* Law, which were given by God to the People of *Israel*, being abrogated, and the Obligation of them annull'd by our Saviour *Christ*; altho' the moral Part of it, which contains the Precept and Rules of eternal Good and Evil, and wherein the very Life and Soul of that Law consisted, be not only abetted and confirm'd, but also very much improv'd by him. And such Actions as are contrary to Good, that is to say, either disagreeable to the Nature and Circumstances of Things and Persons, or else positively forbidden by God, I call Evil. I am indeed of Opinion, that in the Holy

Holy S
positive
some th
have be
forbidd
cular, o
cient A
which a
and ther
us; and
God for
of those
to dive in
by the St
therefore,
whole Du
be enoug
cepts and
given us
no other
his Will f
y Man's
he greater
when he
onableness
f its Obl

Holy Scriptures we have not only the positive Commands of God, whereby some things which otherwise would have been indifferent, are enjoin'd or forbidden; but also, either in particular, or at least in general, a sufficient Account of all those Actions which are eternally Good or Evil, and and therefore to be done or avoided by us; and this design'd by Almighty God for the Direction and Instruction of those Men who have not Ability to dive into, and discover those things by the Strength of their Reason. And therefore, in order to describe the whole Duty of a Christian, it might be enough for me to collect the Precepts and Prohibitions which God has given us in his Word, and to vouch no other Authority or Reason, but his Will for them. But because every Man's Duty will probably make the greater Impression upon his Mind, when he is satisfy'd as to the Reasonableness of it, as well as convinc'd of its Obligation; I shall endeavour,

as I proceed, first, to infer as much of our Duty as I can, from the Nature and Circumstances of Things and Persons; and then to superadd, where there is Occasion, what God has positively ordain'd and commanded as to any Point; and this with the same Conciseness that I have observ'd in my Second Part, neither enlarging upon those Arguments, nor reciting those Texts of Scripture, which I suppose my Reader to be able to call to Mind upon the least Hint of them.

II. To begin then: Since God is the most perfect and excellent Being in himself; and so loving and beneficent to Us; it follows, that *we ought to love him in the highest Degree that possibly we can.* And true and compleat Love, as it is an Act of one Person exerted towards another, as its Object consists in an unfeign'd Desire, First, Of always doing what may be truly grateful and acceptable to the Person belov'd; and, Secondly, Of enjoying and being with him

him as much as may be; the more ardent and zealous we are in our Love to God, the better undoubtedly it is, and we should strive to engage our Affections as well as our Reason and our Will unto him from whom we have receiv'd all things: But yet this Love is not to be measur'd or judg'd of, by the Earnestness of those sudden Motions, which sometimes may arise within us, upon the Contemplation of God's Excellency and Goodness; because to be thus *passionately* affected is not wholly in our Power; and sometimes least so, when we most earnestly desire it. But the true and certain Way of judging whether we love God or not, is by examining whether we are stedfast in our Resolutions, and accordingly diligent in our Endeavours, constantly to obey him, and keep all his Commandments; which is the only way to please, and consequently to enjoy, and for ever be with him: And where the Love of God is thus firmly rooted in the

Will, and brings forth Plenty of Fruit in the Life and Actions, it is certainly nevertheless acceptable to him, altho' it does not so passionately move our Affections as we could wish or desire: And as all the Duties which we owe unto Almighty God, are derived from, and do depend upon that of loving of him, or rather indeed are contain'd in it; so it is very evident, that they are all to be judg'd of by the same foremention'd Rule; that is to say, not so much by the Strength of an inward Impulse upon the Mind (which is a thing not under our Command) as by the steady Agreeableness of our Will and Actions, unto all such Principles as are right and good.

III. Since God is the most excellent and perfect, and consequently the most worthy of all Beings that are or can be; from hence it will follow, that *we ought to honour him with the greatest Honour that may be*. Now, to honour any Person, is in other

other W
outward
him. C
consists
his Bein
outward
shewn, a
Actions
Neglect
as by pe
pear to
Excellen
on him.

IV.

Places, a
secret th
possibly
we shout
very wa
Occasion
in his
is a mo
thing, t
not to
of God,
or asham

other Words, inwardly to esteem, and outwardly to shew our Respect to him. Our inward Esteem of *God* consists in a due Acknowledgment of his Being and Attributes; and our outward Respect to him, is to be shewn, as well by abstaining from all Actions which may favour of any Neglect or Irreverence towards him, as by performing all such as may appear to be suitable, both to his own Excellency, and our Dependance upon him.

IV. Since God is present in all Places, and knows all, even the most secret things; and therefore cannot possibly be deceiv'd or impos'd on; *we should, on this Consideration, be very watchful and careful, upon all Occasions, how we behave our selves in his Presence:* And, methinks, it is a most shameful and deplorable thing, that Men commonly scruple, not to do those things in the Sight of *God*, which they would be afraid or asham'd should be known, or even

H 4 suspected

suspected of them, by Men like themselves.

V. Since God is most true; from hence it will follow, that *we ought to believe whatsoever he says or makes known*, how improbable soever otherwise it might seem to us. But the true Estimate, or such Belief is not to be made by the Clearness and Strength of our speculative Assent unto those Truths, which he has propos'd to our Understanding (for to receive a Truth without any Doubts or Scruples, which sometimes do unaccountably force themselves upon us, even in the clearest Cases, is not always in our Power) but rather by the constant suitableness of our Lives unto the Profession of such Doctrines as we receive and own. And he who has but a weak Faith, and yet leads a good Life, altho' he is not qualify'd for doubtful Disputations, is nevertheless a true Believer; because his Belief answers the main End and Design of the Gospel; which I have

shewn

shewn

Part

Examp

a Man

lieve th

than w

gent in

Doubts

Point o

VI. S

and his

follows,

(and so

our natu

he has i

us miser

hereafter

fear God

who is

Dread a

of his W

the Devil

Wretches

cy, woul

this Duty

of God, v

shewn to be Virtue and Morality, Part I. § 42. Nor can there (for Example) be a better Evidence, that a Man does really and sufficiently believe the Truth of a Life to come, than when he is industrious and diligent in preparing for it; whatever Doubts or Scruples he may have in Point of Speculation about it.

VI. Since God's Power is infinite, and his Authority uncontrollable; it follows, that *we ought to fear him*, (and so much the more, because of our natural Propensity to Sin) because he has it always in his Power to make us miserable here, and eternally so hereafter. But he cannot be said to fear God most (that is, most truly) who is possess'd with the greatest Dread and Terror at the Thoughts of his Wrath or Judgments; for then the Devils, who tremble, or wicked Wretches, who despair of God's Mercy, would be the best Performers of this Duty: But he is the truest Fearer of God, who always takes the greatest

Care not to offend him; the Fear of him being never originally design'd to torment and disquiet our Minds, but only be such a Check upon us, as to keep us in due Awe and Obedience.

VII Since every Sin is an Offence, both against a gracious and a powerful God, and of very dangerous Consequence to the Person who commits it; and since nothing can possibly be conceal'd from God, it follows, that *we ought to be deeply concern'd, and truly sorrowful for every Sin which we commit*, and by no Means to palliate or frame Excuses for them, but *freely to own and confess Them to Him*. But the Truth of this Sorrow is not to be measur'd by the Passionateness of it, or the Tears which it produces (which tho' sometimes good Signs, yet, too often produce but little Effect) but by the hearty Reformation of Life that follows: And he only can be said, to any Purpose, either to be sorry for his Sins,

or

or to
carefu
sake t

is cert
us, he
every
us, if v
provok
whence
serve h
our *W*
and rel
not reli
ner as
whateve
patiently
knowing
in griev
keeps us
nal God
Trust in
chastising
tempt,
supply an
selves fro

or to confess them to God; who is careful for the time to come to forsake them.

VIII. Since God is Almighty, he is certainly able; and since he loves us, he cannot but be willing, to do every thing that is best and fittest for us, if we, by our own Faults, do not provoke him to the contrary: From whence it follows, that, as long as we serve him faithfully, *we ought, in all our Wants and Exigencies to trust and rely upon him.* And if he does not relieve or help us in such a Manner as we desire; *we ought to bear whatever Afflictions we lie under patiently and contentedly;* as well knowing that God takes no Delight in grieving us; but only corrects and keeps us under, in order to our eternal Good. And to demonstrate our Trust in God, and Submission to his chastising Hand; we must never attempt, by any unlawful Means, to supply any of our Wants, or free ourselves from any, even the most grie-

vous Pressures: Altho' at the same time, honest Labour and Industry (yet still with Submission to God's Will) for the compassing of any thing which is lawful and good, is not only allowed, but commended and required.

IX. But since God is a free Agent, and since all the Good which we have or are capable of, comes from him, and depends altogether on his Power and over-ruling Providence; *we ought to pray to him for whatsoever we stand in need of*; and that He would bless all our honest Labours with Success. But because, often, if we had the very things which we desire, they would, at the last tend to our Hurt; and because he knows what is fit for us much better than we our selves; therefore *we ought always to pray, that his Will should ever take Place rather than our own.* And since we can have no Reason to doubt of his Love, we ought to assure our selves that we shall receive either the very things we pray for, or else
that

that wh
us, if o

X. A

rations

our Pra

do suff

ought t

all the

received

fictions

claimed

to a S

think,

Rank:

of a tru

the ma

to his

which

Nor ca

furd th

give G

does n

pose, i

XI.

are a R

we sh

that which is altogether as good for us, if our Sins obstruct it not.

X. And the very same Considerations which prompt us to make our Prayers to God in all our Wants, do sufficiently demonstrate that *we ought to return Thanks unto him for all the Blessings which we have received*: Amongst which those Afflictions which have at any time reclaimed us from Sin, and brought us to a Sense of our Duty, ought, I think, to be placed in the chiefeft Rank: And the only Demonstration of a truly thankful Heart to God, is the making a pious and honest Use, to his Glory, of all those Blessings which we daily receive from him: Nor can there be any thing more absurd than for a Man to pretend to give God thanks with his Lips, who does not also do it, more to the purpose, in his Life.

XI. As God's Justice and Veracity are a Reason beyond Exception, why *we should without Anxiety depend*

on all his Promises; so the great Promise which he has made us, being that of everlasting Happiness; for our more effectual attaining unto which he has sent his Son, our Saviour *Christ Jesus* to suffer for us. It is therefore accordingly our Duty to hope for eternal Salvation; that is to say, to expect the Performance of what God has promised, and the Enjoyment of what *Christ* has purchased for us. But this Hope is to be shewn not by the Strength of our Confidence that we shall be saved (in which it is very possible that a Man may deceive himself) but by our constant Care in duly performing what God requires on our Parts, in order to Salvation: for he only who is diligent in doing the Work, does, with any Reason, expect, or hope for the promised Reward.

XII. As we are obliged to pray unto God for all that we want, and to hope for eternal Salvation from him; so the holy Scripture directs

us,

us, to g
ness up
Christ,
in his
fake to
sented a
cessor w
fore off
ation, c
gether
strengt
to mak
to be a
to dist
as if al
sufficie
out any
trary to
ly Scrip

XII.

and in
or visi
sent C
and in
Doubt
Repre

us, to ground all our Hopes of Happiness upon the Sufferings of Jesus Christ, and to offer up all our Prayers in his Name, as hoping only for his sake to be accepted, who is represented as our only Mediator and Intercessor with God. Whosoever therefore offers to join the Merits, Mediation, or Intercession of any Saint, together with *Christ Jesus*, either to strengthen his Hopes of Salvation, or to make his Devotions more surely to be accepted by God; as he seems to distrust the Mediation of *Christ*, as if alone it were imperfect and insufficient; so he acts not only without any Warrant from, but even contrary to, the plain Tenour of the Holy Scriptures.

XIII. That it is absurd to attempt, and impossible to make any bodily or visible Picture or Image to represent God, who is both incorporeal and invisible, is most evident beyond Doubt or Denial: And when any such Representations are made with that
Design,

Design, and exposed to the View of the People; the natural Consequence of them must needs be, to beget wrong Notions of God in the Minds at least, of the more ignorant sort: For such as any thing is represented to them, such they will be apt to conceive it in all Points to be. My Reason therefore alone would sufficiently conclude, that *it is unlawful to make any sort of Picture or Image to represent God*, altho' he had not so positively forbid it in the Holy Scripture; nor so expressly declared himself a jealous God in that particular.

XIV. In all Cases where one Man may deceive another, to his great damage; it is reasonable that he, who apprehends such Danger, should not depend upon another Man, except he first has good Security given him of his Truth and Fidelity. Now, many times the best, or indeed the only Security which can be given in such Cases, is a solemn Appeal to Almighty

Almighty
of all
Wicked
offering
Vengea
what
this is
an Oath
Oath (
and Co
an evid
of the
viz. his
and Po
duly ta
Revere
quently
or evil
or unad
trivial
underv
(which
with th
consequ
And th
forbidd

Almighty God (who is the Searcher of all Hearts, and the Punisher of all Wickedness) as expecting and freely offering one's self to his Wrath and Vengeance, in Case he prevaricates in what he asserts or promises: And this is what we call by the Name of an Oath. And since he who takes an Oath (I mean with due Seriousness and Consideration) does therein make an evident Acknowledgement of some of the principal Attributes of God, viz. his Omniscience, Justice, Truth, and Power, it follows, that *an Oath duly taken*, is an Act of Honour and Reverence towards God; and consequently, *is not*, in its self, *unlawful, or evil*: But *if an Oath be taken rashly or unadvisedly, or unnecessarily, or in trivial Cases*; it is a lessening and undervaluing of the Divine Majesty (which ought always to be treated with the profoundest Reverence) and, consequently, *sinful* and unlawful. And this is all that I can conceive to be forbidden by our blessed Saviour, *Mat.*

v. 34. Nor can I apprehend, that, that Place contains an universal Prohibition of all Swearing whatsoever: For, besides that the very Context in the preceding Verse does most evidently limit the Discourse to such Oaths as are purely voluntary, and therefore altogether unnecessary; there is neither Reason nor Precedent to induce any one to believe, that our Saviour would universally forbid any thing which has nothing of Evil or Malignity in its Nature: And some even of the best of Men, not only before, but since the Coming of *Christ*, and even the blessed Angels themselves, we are assured in Scripture, have sworn upon some Occasions with great Solemnity. Nor do the holy Scriptures, in other Places, where Mention is made of the taking of an Oath, speak of it as a thing unlawful, or forbidden, or any way universally Evil in it self, but altogether the contrary: Nor did our blessed Saviour, that we can find, design to deprive Princes

or

or Mag
ful Pov
Subjects
ry when
of exact
it shoul
Peace a
wealth,
rences b
as for th
which is
ing in a
no more
Saviour
now me
swer tha
But since
of an C
thereby a
another
follows,
Oath, b
swears,
perform
promised,
who imp

or Magistrates of any Part of that lawful Power which they had over their Subjects before his Coming; who every where were invested with a Right of exacting an Oath from them, when it should be necessary, either for the Peace and Security of the Commonwealth, or for the ending of Differences between private Parties. And as for that Passage of St. *James* v. 12. which is by some urged against Swearing in any Case whatsoever; it being no more but a Recapitulation of our Saviour's Words, which were just now mentioned, needs no other Answer than what I have already given. But since the very Nature and Design of an Oath is to invoke God, that thereby a Man may give Assurance to another of his Truth and Fidelity, it follows, that *to affirm any thing upon Oath, beyond what the Man, who swears, knows to be true; or not to perform what he has upon his Oath promised, is a Sin.* And since he who imposes upon another by doubtful

ful and equivocal Words does as much deceive him, as he who speaks a downright Falsity; from hence it will follow, that such a *deceitful Oath* is altogether as contrary to the Nature and Design of an Oath, and consequently as *unlawful* as a false one. But altho' *an Oath lays an Obligation upon a Man to do whatever he has sworn*, yet if a Man swears to do any thing which is a Sin, and contrary to some former Obligation, under which he indispensably lies to God or Man, *he cannot in this Case be obliged to keep his Oath*, but is bound to repent of it. For, besides that it is not reasonable, that any Man's own Act should free him from any Obligation under which he lies to another; it is plain, that an Oath can neither alter the Nature of a Sin, nor make it lawful to commit it. And since the Design of an Oath in its own Nature is to oblige him to Performance that takes it; and since the Name of God ought never unnecessarily to be invoked,

ed, it
ought n
not on a

differen
remonie
introdu
some o
and oth
in Imit
it may
Places i
ance of
hence,
of swe
Imitati
other I
it was
extraor
at the
laying
ptures
Forms
the A
it mu
an Oa

ed, it follows that *where a Man ought not to keep an Oath, he ought not on any Account to take it.*

XV. According to the Customs of different Places, there have divers Ceremonies and Forms of Words been introduced in the taking of an Oath; some of them grounded upon Reason and others taken up through Mistake in Imitation. Thus, probably, whereas it may have been a Custom in some Places in an Oath, to invoke the Vengeance of God upon one's *head*; from hence, likely, might arise that Form of swearing by the Head; and, in Imitation thereof, by the Hand, or other Parts of the Body. And whereas it was usual to take solemn Oaths, in extraordinary Cases in the Temple, or at the Altar, and, with us at this time, laying the Hand upon the Holy Scriptures; from hence might arise the Forms of swearing by the Temple, the Altar, the Bible, &c. But here it must be noted, that the Nature of an Oath being for Assurance, and consisting

sisting therefore altogether in the Intention of the Parties, viz. as well of him who requires it, as of him who gives it, *He may be said really and truly to swear*, not only who makes use of such a form and Ceremony as is accustomed or prescribed in any certain Place, but he *who any ways signifies to another an Intention to oblige himself under the Penalty of God's Wrath and Vengeance*: And for the same Reason *the joint Intention of both Parties*, as it appears fairly to be signified (without any Place for fraud or Collusion) *must needs be the true Measure of the Obligation of every Oath*.

XVI. When a Man promises a thing, and obliges himself thereto, not to any other Man, but only to God alone; this is what is commonly called a *Vow*, and comes so exactly under the same Rules with a *promissory Oath* (as will presently appear to who-soever reads the foregoing Sections) that I need not again particularly repeat

peat th
Cautio
more
in Vow
luntari
but wh
his Po
the He
and Gr
all tha
beyond
upon h
sure of
Presum
needs
ny Dif

ing w
Goodn
can an
red wi
it wil
going
God on
of the
and A

peat them. But it is a very necessary Caution to be observed in all Oaths, and more especially to be taken Care of in Vows; that *a Man should never voluntarily oblige himself to any thing but what he is well assured is within his Power to perform*; I mean, with the Help of that common Assistance and Grace which God has promised to all that seek it. For if a Man goes beyond this, and ties such Burdens upon himself as he is not sufficiently sure of Strength to bear; besides the Presumption of the thing, it must needs involve his Conscience in many Difficulties and Perplexities.

XVII. Since there is no other Being whatsoever, which for Power, Goodness, or Excellency of Nature can any way be equalled to, or compared with Almighty God; from hence it will follow, that *all these foregoing Duties, which we owe unto God on the Account and Supposition of the Transcendency of his Nature and Attributes, are not any of them*

to be paid unto any Thing or Person besides himself. For that would be in effect to set up somewhat else as a God, or in the Place of God, unto our selves. Let them then who seem either to love, or fear, or trust in any Thing or Person as much or more than God; and who offer up their Prayers and Devotions unto any Saints or Angels; which seems to suppose their Omniscience, and that they know the Secrets of Mens Hearts; and to argue some Distrust of God's Goodness and Readiness to hear us; Let them, I say, and such like Persons, consider well with themselves, how they can answer these things to God, who is a jealous God. But since *every Man*, who is sincere in Religion, *must necessarily suit his Worship and Duty to God according to the Apprehensions which he has of the Deity*; He who is convinced of the Distinction of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead (of which I have endeavoured to give my Thoughts, *Part II.*

§ 22.)

§ 22.)

Father,

the join

Devotio

both lav

Son and

the Fat

to be ba

Names,

are bot

Worship

Reason

any Ma

Worship

further

expressly

he cann

his Pray

neither

it: Jud

every M

Master,

since G

Creature

clear an

Scriptur

§ 22.) *cannot, I think, but make the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the joint Objects of his Service and Devotion.* And why it should not be both lawful and proper to invoke the Son and Holy Ghost, together with the Father, in our Prayers, as well as to be baptized, and to bless, in their Names, together with him, (which are both, I think, Acts of Divine Worship) I confess I can see no sound Reason that can be given. But if any Man shall tell me, that in the Worship of God he dares proceed no further than the Holy Scriptures will expressly warrant, and therefore that he cannot invoke the Holy Ghost in his Prayers, because he there finds neither Precept for, nor Example of it: Judging no Man, but leaving every Man to stand or fall to his own Master, for myself I answer, That, since God has made us reasonable Creatures, I cannot but think, that a clear and rational Consequence from Scripture, is as good a Warrant for any

I

reli-

religious Action, and lays as great an Obligation upon him that is convinc'd of it as the most express Text: And if the Personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost be admitted, (as I here suppose) to me no Consequence seems to be clearer, than that he is to be invoked and worshipped, together with the Father and the Son.

XVIII. Since the End to which God designs all Men is eternal Happiness in another Life, *Part II. § 29.* to a Capacity for which we are again, after our Fall, restored by *Jesus Christ, Part II. § 33, &c.* it follows, that we *ought not to do any thing whereby we may miss of this End, or be diverted from the Prosecution of it; but, on the contrary, that the whole Course of our Actions and Endeavours should ever be bent on the Pursuit of it.*

XIX. No Man will ever be diligent in the Pursuit of any thing of which he seldom thinks, and rarely considers the Benefit of obtaining, and the

the Evil
are oblig
leavours
ought to
and the
of our fr
ations.

any Pa
ct, will
ought in t
ness, to v
ecause t
d Ende
hole, or
g as he a
another
thing in
onscience,
se, which
this W
orld) tha
rt of our
demonstr
tainty, an
s. He,

the Evil of missing it. If therefore we are obliged to be diligent in our Endeavours after eternal Happiness; *we ought to make the Joys of Heaven and the Torments of Hell the Subject of our frequent Thoughts and Meditations.*

XX. He who places his Happiness in any Part of it upon a wrong Object, will never be so diligent as he ought in the Pursuit of that true Happiness, to which he is designed by God; because the Stream of his Thoughts and Endeavours must needs, in the whole, or in part, be diverted, according as he apprehends his Happiness to be another way. Now, that there is nothing in this World (except a good Conscience, and the Hope of eternal Life, which, tho' they may be had in this World, yet are not of the World) that can any way make up a Part of our real Happiness, is abundantly demonstrable from the Vanity, Uncertainty, and Shortness of all worldly Things. He, therefore, who places any

Part of his Happiness upon any thing belonging to this World, most certainly places it upon a wrong Object. But whatsoever a Man proposes to himself as the ultimate End of any of his Actions, it is certain, that therein he places some Part, at least, of his Happiness; for that which is the ultimate End of any Action of a Man, must be proposed as the final Satisfaction of some of his Desires, (for as far as any one's Desire extends, so far off must be the End he aims at) and no Desire of any Man can ever be finally satisfied, till it meets with that wherein he supposes his Happiness (in whole or in part) to consist. From hence then it will follow, that, altho' there are some Pleasures and Satisfaction in this World, which may innocently be enjoyed, yet *No Man ought to propose any worldly Enjoyment as the ultimate End and Design of any of his Actions.* For this would be a placing his Happiness, or some Part of it, upon a wrong Object, and thereby a Hindrance

drance
piness
illustra
seem o
A Ma
relish
other
Tastin
ing, at
serve h
be the
which
der to
for wh
he the
But he
than to
to par
have t
rest of
acts be
End h
justly
perish.
cently
he wea

drance of his Pursuit of the true Happiness for which God designs him. To illustrate this, which otherwise may seem obscure, by an Example or two : A Man may lawfully, without doubt, relish the Meat he eats, (for to what other End did God give us the Sense of Tasting ?) but the Reason of his Eating, at all times, ought to be to preserve his Life and Health, that he may be the better able to do all those Things which God requires from him in order to his Salvation ; this being the End for which God designs him, and which he therefore ought always to pursue. But he who in eating designs no more than to gratify his sensual Appetite, or to pamper his Body, that he may have the greater Enjoyment of the rest of the Pleasures of this World, acts below, or rather contrary to the End he is designed for ; and may justly be compared to the Beasts that perish. Thus also a Man may innocently be pleased to have the Garment he wears decent and comely, because

the Eye is naturally gratified with the Beauty of an Object: But if a Man wears Cloaths which are more fine and costly than some others, his Reason ought to be, that he may not (according to the Humour of the World) be contemned for the Meanness or Sordidness of his Apparel; but endeavour, by all fair ways, to preserve such a Respect among Men (who are very apt to judge by the outward Appearance) as may enable him to do the more good in the World: But he who cloathes himself like the Lilies of the Field, or *Solomon* in all his Glory, only that he may admire himself, or be taken notice of by others for his remarkable Finery, is a vain Person, and acts as foolishly as the Crow in the Fable, who clad himself in the Peacock's Feathers. And what I have here said concerning Food and Raiment, may also be applied to Riches and Honour, and to all Pleasures which are not absolutely unlawful; and to every Thing which Men aim at, or value in this World; which they
may

may la
light in
ments
with t
must r
part of
them f
rily in
tion, C

soever
to suff
dence,
upon t
we cer
both
until f
of his
from
that m
to lay
volunt
ing of
not b
exerci
ings

may lawfully seek after and take Delight in, as far as they may be Instruments of doing good, or are consistent with their Christian Duty; but they must not place their Happiness, or any part of it, in them, for that would make them forgetful of Heaven, and necessarily involve them in the Sins of Ambition, Covetousness, Voluptuousness, &c.

XXI. As we are obliged to do whatsoever God commands, and patiently to suffer whatsoever he, in his Providence, shall think fit to lay or inflict upon us; so, for the same Reasons, are we certainly bound to continue in this, both doing and patiently suffering, until such Time as he shall be pleased, of his own Will, to free and dismiss us from it. From whence it follows, that *no Man ought, upon any Account, to lay violent Hands upon himself, or voluntarily contribute to the shortening of his own Life*; because he knows not but that God might be willing to exercise him yet further, with Sufferings or other Trials, to his Glory,

and the Good of his own Soul. Nor ought any Servant, without Leave or Licence, to withdraw himself from the Service of his Master. And the same Reason which forbids us to destroy our Lives, should also keep us from putting them to any unreasonable or unnecessary Hazard.

XXII. He who in Duty is obliged to any thing, lies also, of necessity, under an Obligation to qualify himself as well as he can, and to seek after, and make use of all such Means and Instruments as are necessary for the better executing and compassing that same Thing to which he is so obliged. Since then *Health of Body, Knowledge, and Understanding, and a Competency of Riches, Power, and Authority*, are necessary Qualifications and Instruments for the better Performance of many of those Duties to which we stand obliged by God's Law; it follows, that these are Things which every Man, according to his Capacity, ought to seek and endeavour after.

after.
for an
Means
for tha
stroy a
Design
fought
Piety,

soever i
the Per
ty, we
to supp
Now,
first lea
ligion,
to under
and sinc
eager Af
and very
Exercise
always s
restrain
may be
never ov
son.

after. But we must not strive nor seek for any of these Things by Ways or Means that are unlawful and wicked; for that would be, beforehand, to destroy and frustrate the very End and Design, for which alone they are to be sought and desired; namely, Virtue, Piety, and the Service of God.

XXIII. On the other side; Whatsoever is an Impediment or Obstacle to the Performance of any necessary Duty, we are bound, as far as we are able, to suppress or remove it out of the way. Now, our Reason being that which first leads us to the Knowledge of Religion, and always enables us rightly to understand and judge of our Duty; and since all violent Passions, and over-eager Affections do disturb our Reason, and very much hinder the free Use and Exercise of it; it follows that *we ought always so to govern our Passions, and restrain all our Affections*, as that they may be wholly subservient to, and never over-rule or mislead our Reason.

XXIV. Since God is the Creator, and therefore also the absolute Lord of all Things, every Thing certainly ought by us to be always put and applied to that very same End and Use (and no other) for which it was intended by him, as far as we have any Intimation of his Design, either from Reason or Revelation. Hence then it will follow that those Creatures which God has given us to feed, sustain, and keep us in Health, that we may be the better able to do our Duty, and labour in our several Callings, ought not at any time (much less ordinarily) to be used to Excess, so as to impair our Health, or discompose our Reason, or any way hinder us in the Performance of any Duty: And that Faculty of Generation which God has endowed us with, in order to the Propagation of Mankind, ought not to be abused for the sake of filthy sensual Pleasure. Nor ought that Plenty of Creatures, which God has bestowed upon us for the Service of all Men,

Men,
grossed
Men,

Necess
in Sup
that G
and Co

to be a
contran
Charit
and alv

XX

the Spi
ture; a
will be
which
lie mor
when

He, th
self in

to avoi

Idleness

it is a S

so muc

the W

Glory a

Men, without Exception, to be engrossed into the Hands of any certain Men, so as that others should want the Necessaries of Life, whilst they abound in Superfluity. By which it appears that *Gluttony and Drunkenness, Lust and Covetousness, are Sins*, and always to be avoided ; and therefore, on the contrary, that *Temperance, Chastity, Charity, and Liberality, are Duties*, and always to be practised.

XXV. Experience assures us, that the Spirit of Man is of an active Nature; and, rather than be altogether idle, will be apt to employ itself in that which is evil. Nor does a Man ever lie more open to Temptation, than when he has nothing at all to do. *He, therefore, that would keep himself innocent, must be careful always to avoid Idleness.* For, besides that Idleness would prove a Snare to us, it is a Shame and a Sin: when there is so much of God's Work to be done in the World (for the promoting of his Glory and the publick Good of Man-

I 6 kind)

kind) that any Man who pretends to be his Servant, should stand still, and not put his helping hand to the carrying of it on. But as we cannot say, that a Man is idle, when he lies down to sleep, that, being thereby refreshed, he may be the better able again to labour; so must we by no means pass that Censure on him who now and then spends some small Portion of his Time in some pleasant and innocent Recreation: that, having his Thoughts hereby a little relaxed and diverted, he may be the fitter to return to Business of Moment and Consequence. But as for those Persons, whose whole Life almost is nothing else but Diversion; and who scarce ever set themselves to any Employment, whereby either God is glorified, or others benefited; what can they expect but the same Sentence which is pronounced upon the idle and unprofitable Servant, *Matt. xxv. 26.* And if to be altogether idle and unemployed is not to be excused or justified, how much more

are

are the
frequent
are evil

XXV

of our
Judgm
stances
and Pen
should ex
inform
true No
cerning
to whom
also of
Subjects
the true
Duties
ken in
of these
wrong
for Exa
lieve Go
and pov
sible for
him in
do: An

are they to be condemned, who are so frequently employed in such Things as are evil and scandalous?

XXVI. Since the right Knowledge of our Duty arises chiefly from a true Judgment concerning the Circumstances and Qualifications of Things and Persons, it follows, that *every Man should endeavour*, as far as he is able, *to inform himself rightly*, and to frame true Notions in all Points, *of and concerning God, Himself, and other Men*, to whom there are Duties owing; *and also of all those Things which are the Subjects of any of those Duties*, and in the true Management whereof such Duties do consist. For if he be mistaken in his Judgment concerning either of these, he must of necessity take wrong Measures in his Actions. Thus, for Example, if a Man should not believe God to be eternal, most good, wise, and powerful, &c. it would not be possible for him to love, honour, and fear him in that Degree that he ought to do: And if we do not always remember

ber our selves to be frail Creatures, subject to Passions and Infirmities, of short continuance in this World, and that whatever Excellency we may seem to have, we derive it wholly from God and his Providence, and not from our selves; we shall never be able, so effectually as we ought, to govern our Passions and restrain our Affections from the things of this World, and pursue that End for which God has designed us. And if we do not consider that other Men (whatever accidental Differences there may be between us) are equal to us in nature, that their Souls are as precious in God's Sight as ours, that *Christ* died for them, as much as for us, &c. we shall not be inclined to behave our selves to them with that Justice, Charity and Humility which do evidently appear to be our Duty. And lastly, if we do not frame a true Notion of the Vanity of the things of this World, and the Excellency of the Joys of Heaven; we shall never be able to prefer

prefer
such a

XX

of Ma
enjoyed
who h
are in
to thin
or any
ble w
On the
nally a
ral, Pa
clude t
design
ning o
never
be affl
greater
time a
his V
upon
ness al
Favou
design
ment

prefer the latter before the former, in such a Measure as we ought to do.

XXVII. Altho' the chief Happiness of Mankind is reserved by God to be enjoyed in another Life, by those who heartily strive for it whilst they are in this; yet can I find no reason to think, that he has decreed us all, or any of us, to be absolutely miserable whilst we remain in this World. On the contrary, since God has originally a Love for all Mankind in general, *Part II.* § 16. I cannot but conclude that he always (even in this Life) designs at least some Share of Beginning of Happiness for every Man; and never afflicts, or suffers any Man to be afflicted, but only in order to his greater Happiness hereafter; until such time as he thinks it proper to pour out his Vengeance and final Destruction upon such as have by their Wickedness altogether forfeited his Love and Favour. Since then God originally designs some Measure or Commencement of Happiness to all Men, even
in

in this Life as well as eternal Happiness hereafter ; it follows, that we (who ought as much as we can to be subservient to all God's Designs) should endeavour as much as in us lies, to promote the Happiness of every Man, both in relation to this World, and of that which is to come. Or in other Terms, that *every Man should endeavour to do as much good to all others as he can, and to hurt no Man whatsoever, if he can avoid it.*

XXVIII. But if every Man always kept singly by himself, without any Society or Intercourse with others, it would be impossible to do any good one to another : And therefore I conclude, that it is the Will of God, that *Mankind should live each with other in a State of Society.* And to make us all the more sensible of the Necessity and Obligation that lies upon us thus to live with and do good to others, God has so ordered the State and Condition of all Mankind, that it is not possible for any Man long to subsist, much less

to

to enjoy any sort of Comfort or Satisfaction of this Life, without the Goodwill and Assistance of others; which he has no Reason to expect, except he be ready upon all Occasions to retaliate what he himself so continually stands in need of. And since God's original Love to Mankind is not confined to some certain Persons, but universally extended to all: I must needs conclude that he designs not only the Comfort and Happiness of some Particulars, but universally of all Men whatsoever. And since the more universal the Society between Men is, the more universal the Happiness which thence results, will be; it will evidently follow, that it is God's Will that every Man should behave himself after a sociable and friendly Manner to every other Man, without Exception. And since there is no Man in the World, however weak and poor, or at never so great a Distance from me, but it is possible that Things may fall out so, as that, one Time or other, I
may,

may, in my Distress, stand in need of his Help and Friendship; my Reason tells me, that it is my Interest, as well as Duty, as much as I am able, before hand to oblige every Man, who comes in my way, by doing Offices of Civility and Kindness to him, as Occasion offers.

XXIX. That God has given to Mankind in general, the free Liberty to make use of all other Creatures for their Support and Sustenance, my Reason, as well as the holy Scripture, does assure me; because, without some of them, we could not preserve our selves in being; and if we had not Liberty to destroy others of them for our use, they would in time so over-spread the Face of the Earth, as that we could not have any safe or convenient Habitation upon it. But if all these Creatures were always to remain in common, so that no Man should have a Right to take Possession of any Part of them to his own particular Use and Disposal, and to exclude others

Part I
others
must
Confu
Food
ment
every
good
might
and if
others
my P
things
ternall
fore co
Laws
every.
which
be no
ficcence
Mank
these f
ty, wh
what i
genera
ble, T
Man's

others therefrom; the Consequence must needs be perpetual Discord and Confusion. For when I had prepared Food to sustain my Hunger, or Rayment to defend me from the Cold; if every other Man should have still as good a Right thereto as I, any one might lawfully take it away from me; and if my Right were as good as any others; I might also lawfully defend my Possession: from which State of things, Contention and Strife must eternally and unavoidably arise. I therefore conclude, that there must be some Laws of Property and Right; and that *every Man must yield to others that which is their own*, or else there can be no such thing as Society and Beneficence preserved and kept up amongst Mankind. Now, in order to discover these same Laws of Right and Property, whereby every Man is to know what is truly his own, I lay down this general Rule, as a thing most reasonable, That, whereas originally every Man's Right and Title to every thing may

may be esteemed equal (God having given us all the Creatures in common, and not by any Act of his, divided to each Man his several Property) if there be any apparent, or but probable Ground, why such or such a particular Thing should be the Property of one Man rather than of another, that ought so to determine the Matter as to oblige all other Men quietly to yield and suffer him to enjoy and use that same Thing, whatever it be, as his own : For where the Balance stands exactly even, a small matter is enough to turn the Scale to one side. Now, in these following Cases there seems to be great Reason for determining a Property in a Thing to particular Persons, *viz.*

- I. When a Man is the first that takes actual Possession of a Thing, and converts it to his own Use. For such a Possession is an Addition to his general Right, beyond what any other Man, who never was in Possession, can pretend. And why should I part with
my

Part I.
my P
deman
able to
I to th
a Man
which
by him
and P
seems
who f
3. W
chang
who l
for it
Man
his ow
ple do
tion c
amon
every
Share
shall f
takes
rear a
it is re
Man

my Possession to any other, or he demand it from me, except he were able to make out a better Title than I to the Thing in Dispute? 2. When a Man takes Possession of a Thing which is actually rejected and deserted by him, who last had the Right to, and Possession of it. For his Case seems to be much the same with his who first takes Possession of a Thing.

3. When a Thing is given, or in Exchange made over to another by him who had before a just Right thereto; for it is highly reasonable that every Man should have Liberty to dispose of his own. 4. When a Company of People do by an Agreement make a Partition of what was before in Common amongst them all, it is reasonable that every Man should acquiesce in that Share, which, upon such a Division, shall fall to his Lot.

5. When a Man takes Care and Pains to produce and rear any thing for his own Use or Profit, it is reasonable that he (and not another Man against his Consent) should enjoy

the Benefit of his own Labour. And, lastly, Where a Society of People do submit their Properties unto a legislative Power, which is erected amongst them; it is reasonable that herein they should always be concluded and determined by the Laws of that Community of which they are Members. And if there be any other Rules for determining the Rights of Men to particular things, it is most evident, that due Care must be taken to keep and observe them, or else farewell all Order and Society.

XXX. Where Fidelity is wanting, Society cannot be truly kept and preserved. I therefore conclude, that *every Man is obliged faithfully to perform whatever he promises*; except the Person to whom the Promise is made, do freely acquit and discharge him from it. But if a Man promises to do a thing which is sinful, he ought not to keep such a Promise as that; as I have already shewn in the Case of an Oath.

XXXI.

XXXI. And the same Reasons which oblige us to hurt no Man, to yield to every Man his Right, and to keep our Promises, do plainly shew, that *he who wrongfully hurts another, or deprives him of his Right, or breaks his Promise made to him, ought, as far as he is able, to make full Restitution and Satisfaction to the Person whom he has thus injur'd.* For he that makes a Breach in human Society, is doubtless oblig'd, as far as he can, to repair it.

XXXII. Where a Proposition is literally false, and yet spoken with no manner of Intention to deceive another, it is not to be called a Lye: But he who asserts any thing for a Truth, with an Intent to make another believe it, which is, or for ought he knows may be, false, he only is to be esteem'd a Lyar. Now, some have doubted whether the Sin of a Lye consists in the bare Untruth, or only in the Injustice of it; and from thence have been inclined to believe, that such a

3

Lye

Lye as does no hurt to any one, nor draws any manner of evil Consequence after it, is not to be looked on as a Sin; and so much the less, if it be told with a real Design only to do Good, or prevent Mischief. The Niceties of this Controversy I leave to be discussed by others. But since human Society cannot be upheld without, in many Cases, a Dependance upon one another's Veracity, I may surely venture thus far to conclude, *viz.* That not only such a Lye as tends to the Damage of another; but also *such a Lye*, however otherwise innocent, *as gives Occasion to render a Man's Truth suspected in other Cases*, is to be reputed *unlawful*, if for no other Reason, yet at least for this, because it is injurious to human Society. *And the same Reason will hold as strongly against all mental Reservations, and equivocal Expressions:* For what is human Society at any time the better for the literal Truth of what a Man says, if others

Part I
others
do no
by the
them?

XX
that e
Esteem
may b
and go
per en
to aff
it is u
take e
of all
may
himself
others
and t
for the
is goo
that i
thing
helps
to the
to pra
under

others who are therein concerned, do not understand his true Meaning by the Words which he speaks to them?

XXXIII. It is highly reasonable, that every Man should have such an Esteem and Respect shewed him, as may be proportionable to his Virtues and good Qualities: And as it is proper enough for a Man, by lawful ways, to assert his own Reputation, when it is unjustly aspersed; so he ought to take especial Care in the Management of all his Words and Actions, that he may not seem to exalt or magnifie himself, or to despise or undervalue others beyond what is not only just and true, but also necessary, either for the bringing about something that is good, or the preventing something that is evil. For there is scarce any thing that gives greater Disgust, or helps to render a Man more odious to the World, than an overforwardness to praise and magnifie himself, and to undervalue others, if he be not necessitated

sitated thereto by some very just Reason: And on the contrary, there is scarce any thing which reconciles a Man more to the Favour and Goodwill of People than when he is not over apt to ascribe much to himself, but is ready to give the utmost Honour and Respect to all others that in Reason can be thought due. I conclude therefore, that *Pride is a Sin, and Humility a Duty*, because the former tends to disturb, but the latter strengthens and confirms human Society.

XXXIV. What is incumbent upon him to do, who has done wrong to another, I have just now shewn: But if another Man wrongs, or any way endeavours to injure me; as it is lawful for me (so for every Man) to stand upon my Defence, and use my utmost Endeavours to save myself from Wrong or recover that which is my Right (for otherwise all the good and honest Men in the World would continually lie exposed to the Wrongs and Insults of any evil Man, who might have

Mind to destroy them) so I, and *every Man ought to be ready* at any time *to be reconcil'd to an Adversary or Enemy*; provided it may be upon such Terms as are consistent with our own Safety: *Nor ought any Man, upon any Occasion, to do any greater Harm to his keenest Enemy, than what he apprehends to be absolutely necessary to his own Preservation.* For since Society and Peace among Mankind is the Will and Design of Almighty God; if a Breach be made therein by another, I ought for my Part to do nothing which may make it wider; but ever to be ready to give a helping Hand to the closing and making of it up.

XXXV. Hitherto I have endeavoured to lay down the main and fundamental Rules of that Duty, which every Man is obliged to pay and perform to God, to Himself, and to all other Men. Now, to deduce all the particular Branches of Virtue and Piety from these main Principles; and to shew how Morality is improved and

refined by the Gospel, to the highest degree of Perfection, is a thing not difficult to be done, but yet inconsistent with my design'd Brevity: For which therefore I must refer my Reader to some of those Books of Christian Piety, wherein each Particular of our Duty is, at large, described and pressed. But in the mean time, if we would have a shorter Abstract of our Duty than what I have now been giving, the Holy Scripture furnishes us with three Rules (two exprest and one implied) from which every thing that we can be oblig'd to do, is easily deduced; and they are, 1. That *we should love God with all our Heart, Soul, and Strength.* 2. That *we should truly love our Selves*, that is to say, so as always to aim at and pursue our true and chief Happiness. And 3. That *we should love others as we do our selves*; not with the same Degree of Love; for that is not only unreasonable, but impossible, but with the same Reality and Sincerity; or in other terms, that

we

we should
what we
they should
 their C
 But b
 which
 bent up
 particul
 those
 may co
 which
 Accoun

XX

the Ge
 increas
 dent;
 clination
 them
 to prop
 Love a
 to the
 wards
 But if
 ly by
 dering
 any fel

we should ever do unto all other Men what we would think reasonable that they should do unto us, if we were in their Circumstances, and they in ours. But besides these general Duties, which are indiscriminately incumbent upon all Men, there are divers particular ones, which do arise from those several Relations which Men may contract and bear to others, of which it is fit that I give some brief Account.

XXXVI. That God would have the Generation of Men continued and increased upon the Earth, is very evident; as well from the natural Inclination which he has implanted in them (as in all other living Creatures) to propagate their Kind, as from that Love and Affection which is common to them with other Creatures) towards those who spring from them. But if Mankind were propagated only by the Exercise of wild and wandering Lust, without Confinement to any settled Rules or Laws; this would

K 3

bring

bring in such a Deluge of Confusion and Disturbance as would unavoidably deprive them of the greatest Part of those Satisfactions which at the present they do, or may enjoy. For if there were no such thing as settled Marriages, we can hardly suppose that ever there would be any sort of settled Families, which are the first beginnings of Society and Regularity amongst Men: Fathers would not know which were their own Children, and consequently would take no Care to bring them up, or provide for them; and not only the Pain of bearing, but the whole Trouble of nourishing, rearing, and providing for Children, would lie wholly upon the female Sex, who by themselves could but very imperfectly perform that Work as it should be done. Since therefore God intends the Comfort and Satisfaction of Men, even whilst they are here upon Earth, I conclude that it is his Will, that *Mankind should be propagated no other way but by settled Marriages*, that is
by

Part III
by a C
tween
under f
to prom
Mankin
sign, o
XX
have n
time,
Design
rectly
should
a time
former
Easter
testifie
and C
the Co
Family
ble to
ought
Men;
are fo
over,
have
ther v

by a Compact and Agreement between the Male and Female, and that under such Rules as are fit and proper to promote the general Happiness of Mankind, which being his great Design, ought ever also to be ours.

XXXVII. That a Woman should have more than one Husband at a time, is notoriously contrary to the Design of Marriage, and therefore directly unlawful: And that a Man should have more than one Wife at a time, the Experience of many, in former Ages, and at this time in the Eastern Countries, does sufficiently testify to be contrary to that Peace and Quietness which is necessary to the Comfort and Happiness of every Family, and therefore not so agreeable to that universal Friendship which ought ever to be preserved amongst Men; but especially among those who are so nearly allyed together. Moreover, if Men and their Wives should have liberty to part one from the other whenever they please (besides the

Confusion and Disturbance which this also must breed in Families, especially where there are Children in the Case) Marriage would hardly differ from that wild and wandring Lust, against which I have spoken in the preceding Paragraph. I conclude, therefore, that altho' before the Coming of *Christ*, if a Man took more Wives than one, not for Lust (which is unlawful, § 24.) but merely for Propagation, it might in some Cases be dispensed with; yet it ever was most pleasing to God, that a Man should have but one Wife at a time; and that nothing but Death should ever part a Man and his Wife; except the evil Behaviour of one Party should make the Continuance of the Marriage Compact and Cohabitation, not only something uneasy (for that for Peace and Quietness sake should be born patiently) but downright intolerable. But these things which Reason may perhaps but imperfectly suggest, the Gospel has passed and established into Laws, *viz.* that *as every Woman*

is

is to be
must be
time;
and W
Case of
is, that
times b
Inconve
Liberty
disturb

XXX

all Me
Jews an
a more
against
as were
within
tion. A
enough
a Wom
Rules w
ture, of
not only
Men all
about su
so about

is to have but one Husband, so no Man must have more than one Wife at a time; nor must any thing part Man and Wife but Death, except it be the Case of Adultery; And better much it is, that particular Persons should sometimes be forced to labour under some Inconvenience, than that any such Liberty should be allow'd as tends to disturb and distract the World.

XXXVIII. We generally find, that all Men, even Heathens, as well as Jews and Christians, have conceived a more than ordinary Abhorrence against the Marriage of such Persons as were very nearly allyed together, within some certain Degrees of Relation. And since the World is wide enough for a Man to chuse a Wife, or a Woman a Husband; those general Rules which are given to us in Scripture, of providing for things honest, not only in the Sight of God, but of Men also; and of taking care not only about such as are just and honest, but also about such as are lovely and of good

report, should teach us, that *no Person should engage in such a Marriage as is by wise Men commonly reputed to be incestuous and unlawful.*

XXXIX. Since the Relation of Husband and Wife is wholly owing to the mutual Compact and Agreement which is made between them at their Marriage, the Duties which result from that Relation, can be no other but the faithful keeping and observing of that same Compact and Agreement, the Conditions of which may be more or fewer, according as the Parties shall think convenient. But these are always necessary, and must never be wanting, *viz.* That *the Husband and Wife must sincerely love each other; must be strictly faithful to each other's Bed* (without which mutual Love can never be preserv'd entire) *and Christianity expressly adds, what Reason perhaps does also obscurely suggest, that the Wife must be subject and obedient to her Husband.*

XL
and b
is not
God's
rith a
taken
Person
gation
than
and w
And f
ry and
Comf
kind u
piness
clude,
Paren
can to
promot
in thi
come.
needs
a law
chastit
ry to
Order

XL. When Children are begotten and brought forth into the World, it is not reasonable, nor agreeable to God's Design, that they should perish and die for want of Care to be taken of them. Nor are there any Persons upon whom a greater Obligation can lie to bring up Children, than upon those who begat them, and were the Cause of their Being; And since God intends not the Misery and Affliction, but generally the Comfort and Satisfaction of Mankind upon Earth, as well as their Happiness hereafter in Heaven, I conclude, that *it is ever the Duty of Parents to take the best Care they can to bring up their Children, and to promote their true Happiness, both in this World, and that which is to come.* For which Reason we must needs suppose them to be vested with a lawful Power of governing and chastising them, as far as is necessary to keep them in good and regular Order.

XLI. And on the other side, since Children are beholding to their Parents, even for their very Being, whereby they are capacitated not only for the Enjoyment of the Satisfaction of this Life, but also for eternal Happiness in the World to come, it is highly reasonable, that they *should love their Parents with a very high Degree of Affection*; and should always be ready to make them the best Returns of Duty and Service that they can. And according as Parents have been careful in bringing up and making Provision for their Children, so the Childrens Love and Affection ought still more and more to be return'd and express'd towards them.

XLII. Where Parents, by Death or otherwise, are render'd incapable of nourishing and breeding up a Child; or where they utterly forsake and expose him to the wide World, before he is able to provide for, or take care of himself; if another Person takes him, and maintains and
puts

Part III.
puts him
Child i
proporti
and Du
the Par

XLI
ever an
Name,
and re
with t
such or
ing onl
Israel;
ever th
ly esta
is orda
diate P

XLII
Law o
suprem
dren, i
But I
ture, t
any K
the fa
and S

puts him in a Way of living, *such a Child is in all Reason obliged to pay a proportionable Share of filial Love and Duty to him who has performed the Part of a Parent to him.*

XLIII. It is not pretended, that ever any Person, or Family, by Name, were ever by God's particular and revealed Appointment, invested with the Power of governing over such or such a certain People, excepting only the Case of the People of *Israel*; I therefore conclude, that however *the Magistracy which is lawfully established throughout the World*, is ordained of God; it is not by *immediate Revelation from Heaven.*

XLIV. Whether a Parent, by the Law of Nature has the Power of a supreme Magistrate over his own Children, is not necessary here to enquire. But I see no Ground in Reason or Nature, to judge that the eldest Son of any Kindred successively should have the same Power over his Brothers and Sisters (who are no way behold-
ing

ing to him for their Being, nor, it may be, for their Well-being) and much less over his Father's Brothers and Sisters; as the common Parent of a whole Family may have over all that spring from him. I conclude therefore, that *lawful Magistracy is not to be derived by the Law of Nature from the alone right of Primogeniture*. Nor do we ever meet with any Prince in History, who derived his Authority from this only Fountain; and if this were the true Right and Title of Magistracy, it would follow, that all the World ought to be but one Monarchy; and *Adam's* Heir Male the Emperor thereof; and all the Kings and Emperours that ever were, whose Titles were originally bottom'd upon another Foundation, were no better than mere Usurpers.

XLV. Where one Man conquers another, that is to say, by force of Arms, or by Stratagem, gets him so into his Power, as that he can destroy or kill him at his Pleasure; the conquered

Part II.
quered
to do a
Preserv
on tha
deavou
nour t
of the
he fin
vation
Conq
there
being
whic
him
him
ther
allo
obey
set
wh
wo
the
W
wi
ou
no

quered Person indeed being obliged to do all that honestly he can for the Preservation of his own Life, ought, on that account to use his best endeavours, by an obsequious Demeanour to assuage and pacifie the Fury of the Conqueror. But further than he finds necessary to his own Preservation, he is not oblig'd to obey the Conqueror, except he binds himself thereto by some Act of his own; there being no Law of God or Nature which lays any further Obligation on him in that Case, but only to preserve himself, without doing wrong to another. Since then all the World does allow, that a Subject is bound to obey the Magistrate who is lawfully set over him, even in those Cases where no Danger in this World, would attend his Disobedience, or, as the Apostle expresses it, *not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake*; it will follow that *Conquest alone, without any Compact or Agreement, does not establish the Conqueror a law-ful*

ful Magistrate over the Conquered People. For if it did, there could be no difference between a Liege Subject, and a Prisoner of War.

XLVI. If any Man unjustly invades the Property, or attempts the Life of another, it is lawful for him, to whom the Wrong is offered, to defend himself the best he can; and if he has no other way of securing himself, nor can prevail with his Enemy to desist from his evil Design, the Necessity of preserving himself from Death, or (which may be as bad, or worse) from Ruin, will certainly justify the Killing of him. For otherwise the Lives and Fortunes of all honest Men must for ever be exposed to the arbitrary Pleasure of every lawless and wicked Person, which is contrary to that Comfort and satisfactory State, which we suppose God generally to design for Men, even in this Life; and that which is allowable for every single Man to do for himself, is surely no less lawful for a Society of

of Men combining together, to do for their joint and mutual Safety. Moreover, if in such a Society any Person be taken in, or after, such an unlawful Attempt, it is lawful for them to punish him in such a Manner (whether by Death or otherwise) as may be necessary to terrify others from doing the like for the time to come: For without this there could be no Security against evil doers; who might contrive to act their Mischief so secretly, as not to be killed, or even resisted in the very Fact it self. But if such a Society have not certain Laws and Rules to proceed by in all such Cases, and some certain Persons to put those Laws in execution, every Man would take upon him to be his own Judge; and what might seem fit and reasonable to one, might appear otherwise to another of a contrary Interest, from whence perpetual Factions and Confusions must needs follow. But there is no Reason that any one, or more, of such a Society, without the consent of
the

the rest should take upon them to make Laws for, or exercise Authority over, the whole Community. For if it were in every Man's Power to make himself a Magistrate, all might set up to be Rulers, and few or none would be Subjects; which would bring in Confusion, and destroy the Society. But when the whole Society do agree and consent, that such certain Persons shall have the exercising of such certain Powers (which originally are in the Body of the Society itself) it is then lawful for those Persons to act accordingly; and they who have consented to their Authority, are by virtue of that Consent, obliged to pay Obedience to them. I conclude, therefore, that *the Original of Magistrates is from the Consent of the People*, since there is no other solid Ground, that I can find upon which to establish them. *And when once a legislative and executive Power is thus settled and established by the Consent of a People, who acquiesce*

quiesce
take S
is to b
confir
ment;
is acco
particu
the Pro
this w
Gover
time;
Reason
and C

rives i
of the
low,
Magis
Obedi
People
those
Place
on ha
neithe
mand
obey.

quiesce in it, and upon all Occasions take Shelter under its Protection, it is to be looked upon as ratified and confirmed by God's own Appointment; and *Subjection and Obedience* is accordingly *to be paid to it* by every particular Person who abides within the Precincts of its Jurisdiction. For this was the very Case of the *Roman* Government, which was in *St. Paul's* time; and there is exactly the same Reason for it in all other Kingdoms and Commonwealths whatsoever.

XLVII. Since then Magistracy derives it self wholly from the Consent of the People; from hence it will follow, that *the original Rule of the Magistrate's Power, and the Subjects Obedience*, is that Consent which the People have given; or, in other Terms, *those Laws and Constitutions of the Place, in which the Body of the Nation have acquiesced*: Beyond which neither any Magistrate ought to command, nor is any Subject bound to obey. For where there is no Law, there

there can be no Transgression, nor any Obligation to Obedience; nor consequently any Right to command.

XLVIII. *But if the legislative Power of any Nation do enact any thing which is contrary to the express Law of God, or the eternal Laws of Good and Evil; no particular Man can be bound to obey such a Constitution.* For the Authority of God ought to weigh more with us, than that of any Community whatsoever; and it is expressly ruled in Scripture, that we ought to obey God rather than Man.

XLIX. And the same Reason (*viz.* Self-preservation) which allows a Society thus settled into a Government, to punish Malefactors within themselves; must also justify them, if by force of Arms they defend themselves against any foreign Enemy, which would wrong or oppress them; or endeavour to recover their Right from those who have taken it from them, and refuse to restore it. For otherwise it were in vain for a Community to
hope

Part I
hope
Order
the wh
lie cor
and I
may a
clude
sensiv
be ver
the le
Script
Profes
under
contra
scienc
ought
with
as can
of his
fie hin
Cause
draws
as we
Man
so, for
not to

hope to subsist by maintaining good Order and Discipline at home, if all the while they must, without Remedy, lie continually exposed to the Wrongs and Insults of every Enemy which may assault them from abroad; I conclude therefore, that *War, whether defensive or offensive, may, in many cases, be very just and lawful*: Nor is there the least Word throughout the Holy Scriptures which may represent the Profession of a *Soldier*, who fights under a lawful Authority, as any way contrary to Religion and a good Conscience: Tho' such a Man certainly ought not only to exercise his Calling with as much Mildness and Humanity as can be consistent with the Service of his Country: but also ever to satisfy himself first of the lawfulness of the Cause in which he engages before he draws Sword in the Quarrel: For as we are obliged to do no Hurt to any Man whatsoever, if we can avoid it; so, for the very same Reason, ought we not to become instrumental in any
Wrong

Wrong or Injustice which another Man, (let him be who he will) intends to do.

L. That *an humble Demeanour, together with a reasonable Diligence, and an honest Fidelity to his Master, is the Duty of every Servant*, is most apparent; because if a Servant be either haughty, negligent, or unfaithful, he ceases in effect to be a Servant. And on the other side, that *Justice and Humility are no less the Duty of a Master towards his Servant* is altogether as clear, because where these are not observed, the Condition of a Servant must be intolerable, and contrary to that comfortable State which we suppose God to design for all Men: and therefore for Servants, who are as much Men, and as much valued by God, and for whom *Christ* died, as well as for their Masters.

LI. That *all Christians are, or (according to Christ's Institution) ought to be combined together into one Society, which is called the Church,*

Church, I have already said, *Part II.*

§ 40. Now, in all such incorporated Societies, these three things are ever to be considered, 1. What is the Design of the Person or Persons, who first gather and institute them? 2. What Advantage accrues to those who become Members of them? And 3. What are the Laws and Rules to be observed by the whole Body, and every Member of it? The Design of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, who at the Will of his heavenly Father, instituted and embodied the Christian Church, was to purifie unto himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works, or in other Terms, by this Incorporation so made, more effectually to promote the Practice of Virtue and Godliness in the World. The Benefit and Advantage which every true Member of this Church may propose to himself, is the Participation of God's Grace and Assistance here for the better Performance of his Duty, and the Enjoyment of everlasting Happiness hereafter ;

hereafter; both which are promised to us by God, in and through *Christ Jesus* our Saviour. And lastly, the Laws of the Christian Church are either, 1. The general Laws of Piety and Morality, of which I have hitherto been giving an Account; or, 2. Such particular Constitutions as are proper to it, considered as a congregated and incorporated Body of Men, which I have reserved to be treated of in the last Place of all.

LII. *The first thing which is incumbent on every Man, as (or rather, in order to become) a Member of the Christian Church, is to be baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; which Ceremony is intended to put us in mind of that Purity and Cleanness from Sin, to which we ought to bring our Souls by a virtuous and holy Life. And altho' to wet or wash the Body with Water, may seem but a slight and inconsiderable thing, yet since our Saviour Christ has expressly appointed and*
commanded

commanded it, and since his Apostles were always most careful to perform it; insomuch, that even they who had received the extraordinary Gift of the Holy Ghost from Heaven, were yet required to be baptiz'd, in order to become visible Members of the Church: This Ceremony, I think, ought not to be left off, or discontinued. Altho' whether it be perform'd by dipping the Body under the Water, or by sprinkling the Water upon it, to me seems to be altogether indifferent; and to be regulated only by Prudence or the Custom of particular Places. For neither does the Word *Baptize* signifie any more than to wash; which may be done either way; nor does it appear that the Apostles dipped all those whom they baptized. Moreover since sprinkling as well as dipping may sufficiently denote the washing, and cleansing of the Soul from Sin; and since Baptism is not expressly in the holy Scripture, determined to either of these ways, to the exclusion

L sion

sion of the other; I conclude, that God has left the matter (so far) indifferent to us; and to be order'd according to Prudence as the Circumstances of Things and Persons shall at any time direct: And as long as the Substance and Design of his Command is carefully retained, I see no necessity of being so very solicitous about a Circumstance of it; except it could evidently be made appear, that he had appointed and determined it.

LIII. Since then Baptism is as the Entrance or Door of Admittance into the Church of *Christ*, it will follow, that all they and they only who are duly qualified to be Members of his Church are fit to have Baptism administered to them. If any Person has been brought up out of the Church, until he comes to Years of Understanding and Knowledge, he is then, and only then, qualified to be a Member of the Church, when, having repented of all his former Sins, he believes and owns, that *Jesus* is the

Christ

Christ, the Son of God, and consequently receives and professes that Faith and Doctrine which he has taught and authorized, and obliges himself to live according to all those Laws and Rules which he has prescribed to us: this being the very Condition which our Saviour indispensably requires from his Church, and every Member of it according as they are capable of performing it. But if a Child be born of Christian Parents, or is so in the Hands of Christian Guardians, as that it is in their Power to bring him up in the true Religion; and they do promise and engage so to educate him; such a Child as this, even before he comes to any Knowledge of things, is yet qualified to be a Member of the Church of *Christ* (upon the Presumption that he will perform what God requires from him when he comes to be capable of it) and so to continue, if by Apostasy or Wickedness he does not, in Process of time, separate himself again from it. For this, beyond

dispute was the Case of Infants before the Coming of *Christ* who at eight Days old (if Males) were to be circumcised, and thereby admitted into the Church of God, and within his Covenant, if they were either the Sons, or Servants born in the House of believing Persons, and who, as well as their Parents, are expressly said to enter into Covenant with God, which is but another Expression for becoming of his Church. And no one surely will offer to say, that the Case of Infants is made worse than it was, by our Saviour's coming into the World; especially, since he has expressly commanded, that little Children should come unto him, and not be forbidden; for that of such is the Kingdom, that is, the Church of God. I conclude therefore, that not only *Adult Persons, who make a due Profession of their Faith and Repentance*; but also *such Infants as are in a way of being brought up in the Christian Religion, are, without any* Obstacle

Obstacle, *to be admitted to Baptism.*

LIV. There are some Passages in the New Testament, which seem plainly to suggest to us, that it was a constant Custom with the Apostles of *Christ*, to lay their Hands upon all such as had been baptiz'd (which laying on of Hands was undoubtedly accompany'd with Prayer to God) in order to their receiving the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit of God: But that this was a thing positively prescrib'd and commanded, I do not find clearly prov'd: And therefore, altho' I dare not hastily condemn those particular Churches where this same Custom is diffus'd or intermitted; yet since the Grace and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, in order to the leading of a good Life, and obtaining eternal Happiness, is for ever continued unto the Church, as I have said *Part II. § 42.* and therefore ought ever to be sought for (altho' the working of Miracles, and speaking of all Languages, without learning them,

be ceas'd from amongst us) I cannot but conclude that the laying on of Hands upon Persons that have been baptiz'd together with Prayer to God for their Growth and Continuance in Grace, which is commonly call'd *Confirmation*, is a prudent and godly Custom, and ever fit to be continued in the Church.

LV. As every particular Man whatsoever is oblig'd, in his own private Person, to honour and worship God; so *the Church, being a Society incorporated for the better serving of God, is under an Obligation* to do the same in her associated Capacity, that is to say, *to assemble together for his Worship.* and because the whole Number of Christians, which are dispers'd over the Face of the Earth, are not capable of meeting together in one Place; the universal Church therefore lies under a Necessity of subdividing it self into particular Churches; and those again into particular Congregations, according as they

Part II.
they fi
the pu
they a
since
and C
to be,
One C
Saviou
found
ought
among
a just
Union
sign'd
to be
on th
where
Mem
shoul
the
thing
where
be a
bling
L
form

they find to be most convenient for the pursuing that same End for which they are so incorporated. Moreover, since all these particular Churches and Congregations, are still, or ought to be, but Parts and Members of that One Catholick Church which our Saviour *Christ* has appointed and founded; it follows, that none of them ought to constitute or act any thing among themselves, which may give a just Occasion for the breaking of that Union and Concord which he design'd, and has commanded always to be maintain'd amongst them. But, on the contrary, Matters ought every where so to be order'd, as that if a Member of any one particular Church should travel into any other Part of the World, he may meet with nothing in any Christian Congregation, where he comes, which justly should be a Hindrance to him from assembling or communicating with it.

LVI. *The particular Acts to be perform'd in these Christian Assemblies,*

are all such as tend to the Edification of the People in Virtue and Godliness (which is the Design of their Incorporation) and consequently to the promoting of each Man's eternal Salvation (which is the End that every Christian is suppos'd to pursue.) All which are reducible to these two Heads, viz. Devotion towards God, which includes Confession of Sins, Prayer for all things necessary, both for themselves and others, and Praising of God, as well for his own Excellency and Perfection, as for his Love and Beneficence to all Mankind: And

2. *The Instruction of the People which are assembled, which is to be done by reading and explaining the Holy Scriptures, catechizing, preaching, &c. But there is one Act of Devotion towards God to be perform'd in such publick Assemblies, which is commonly known by the Name of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion; of which it will be fit to say something*

thing m
an Ord
Instituti
which I

Passion,
Sins of
out of
us in th
ing ma
every o
in that
made to
the Te
eternal
both th
his De
tual O
tinued
should
and a
and dra
meet to
as a R
for us
forth

thing more particularly because it is an Ordinance altogether of positive Institution, as well as Baptism, of which I have already spoken.

LVII As our Saviour's Death and Passion, which he underwent for the Sins of the whole World, should ever out of Gratitude be remember'd by us in the most emphatical and affecting manner; so, except we have, every one of us, a Share and Interest in that Attonement which he thereby made to God for us, we cannot, by the Terms of the Gospel, hope for eternal Salvation. In order then to both these Ends *he himself*, before his Death, *appointed it, as a perpetual Ordinance* for ever to be continued in his Church, *that Bread should be blessed, broken, and eaten; and a Cup also blessed, distributed, and drank, in such Assemblies as should meet together in his Name*, not only as a Remembrance of his Sufferings for us, which are thereby shewn forth and represented; but also as

the Communion, that is to say, the Exhibition of his Body and Blood unto, and the Participation of them, by all faithful and good Christians. To say with the *Roman Church*, that the Substance of Bread and Wine, being blessed or consecrated in this Ordinance, are transubstantiated, or turned into the very real Substance of the Body and Blood of *Christ*, so as that that very same Body of his which was crucify'd, and that Blood which was shed, are wholly and entirely received into the bodily Mouth, and swallow'd down by every Communicant; does not only draw after it such monstrous Absurdities, as no Man, I think, without renouncing his Reason, can digest, nor can be inferr'd from any Passage of Scripture interpreted according to the Rules which I have laid down, *Part I* § 25. and 33. But is also directly contrary even to the Letter, as well as Meaning of the New Testament; in which the Bread in this Holy Institution,

is plain
same R
Wine,
after th
As the
that th
are not
his Ch
they of
so follo
the Ho
Christ
their de
(which
wholly
Transfu
than m
ventions
Man m
and pa
at never
when h
enjoys t
it (as a
reap the
far dist

is plainly called Bread (and by the same Rule the Wine must still remain Wine, as to its natural Substance) even after the Blessing or Consecration of it. As therefore I must needs conclude, that the Body and Blood of *Christ* are not received by the Members of his Church after that manner which they of *Rome* do define; so must it also follow, that their worshiping of the Host and pretended Sacrifice of *Christ* in the Mass, together with their depriving the Laity of the Cup (which, besides other Absurdities, do wholly depend upon the Doctrine of Transubstantiation) are none other than mere human and unlawful Inventions and Practices. But since a Man may then be said truly to receive and partake of any thing though at never so great a Distance from him when he has a real Interest in it, and enjoys the Benefit and Advantage of it (as a Man may have an Estate, and reap the Profits of it, tho' it lies in a far distant Country) I do therefore

conclude, that the way whereby we do receive or communicate in, the Body and Blood of *Christ*, by this Ordinance, is by being made Partakers of those Benefits, which, by the crucifying of his Body, and the shedding of his Blood, do accrue to us, and that whosoever eats of this Bread, and drinks of this Cup in such a manner as *Christ* has appointed, has thereby assuredly a Share of those Benefits held forth and convey'd unto him.

LVIII. How often *this Ordinance* is to be practised and repeated in every Congregation, is not expressly determin'd either by *Christ*, or his Apostles; and therefore can only be regulated by the Prudence of the Church it self: But common Reason will tell us, that it should be *so often at least as may be sufficient to preserve a fresh and lively Remembrance of the Sufferings of our Saviour in the Minds of the People*; this being one main End of its first Institution. And

so

so often
stian, v
derstand
of doing
another
it. For
Ordinanc
ed for
great
Death
bedience
fore is
ry great

even a
to draw
dinanc
meanin
Hypoc
as mo
Sacrific
contin
minati
to res
stance
Comm

so often therefore ought every Christian, who is arriv'd to Years of Understanding (for such only are capable of doing any thing in remembrance of another) to come and be Partakers of it. For to contemn or neglect this Ordinance which *Christ* has appointed for such a peculiar End, argues a great Slight and Disregard of his Death and Passion (besides the Disobedience to his Command) and therefore is justly to be looked on as a very great and heinous Sin.

LIX. As it is a great Affront, and even a Mocking of God, for a Man to draw near to him in any of his Ordinances, without a sincere and well-meaning Heart (for which Reason Hypocrisy in Scripture is represented as most odious, and the Prayer and Sacrifice of a wicked Man, whilst he continues such, is said to be an Abomination unto God) so does he seem to resent such a Practise in no Instance more than this of the Holy Communion; of which he who eats
and

and drinks unworthily, is expressly said by the Apostle to be guilty of the Body and Blood of *Christ*, and to eat and drink Damnation to himself: Which Expressions, altho' they are differently interpreted by divers Persons, yet in whatever Sense we take them, they do abundantly shew, that God is in a particular Manner offended with those, who any way profane this sacred Institution. *It therefore is the Duty*, and ought very much to be the Concern of every Christian, first to examine himself, and to make the best trial and enquiry that he can, whether he be truly sincere in his Resolutions of serving and obeying God faithfully all his Life-long (for any Person who is thus dispos'd, and none other, is ever acceptable to God,) and then, with Devotion and Reverence suitable unto such Sincerity, to come and eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup: That as, on the one side, he may not neglect what *Christ* has commanded and requir'd; so, on the

the other
nalty w
thy Rec
.. LX.

God by
well by
Though
which
unto G
outward
even in
may be
Minds i
yet are
God of
But wh
to join
their L
outward
cause th
ing the
Worshi
ed toge
underst
no Wo
Langua

the other, he may not incur the Penalty which is threatned to an unworthy Receiver.

LX. He that worships or prays to God by himself alone, may do it as well by offering up only the inward Thoughts and Desires of his Mind, which are clearly seen and known unto God as by expressing himself outwardly by Words; which, tho' even in our private Devotions they may be very proper to keep our Minds intent upon what we are about, yet are no way necessary to inform God of what we think or wish for. But when a Society of Men do meet to join together in God's Worship, their Devotion must of necessity be outwardly expressed in Words; because there is no other way of keeping their Thoughts (wherein their Worship does consist) united and joined together. And since Words not understood, are in effect the same with no Words at all; I conclude, that *the Language wherein the Worship of any Church*

Church or *Cogregation* is offered up to God, must always be such as is well understood by the Assembly of the People who meet together. Nor does even the Doctrine of Transubstantiation amaze me more than that the Church of Rome should own the 14th. Chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the *Corinthians* to be the Word of God, and yet have all their publick Services every where performed in the *Latin* Tongue only, which is not now understood by the Generality of any Nation in the World.

LXI. As *Peace and Unity, mutual Love and good Agreement* amongst the Members of every Society, together with *Order and Decency*, in all that is transacted amongst them, are absolutely necessary to the being and continuance, or at least to the well-being of the Society it self: so are they carefully prescribed and inculcated by *Christ* and his Apostles, as things to be always preserved and maintained in the *Christian Church*.
And

And as
olation
guilty c
Matters
clearly
cannot
to our
which t
and Pre

determi
gether
very M
comes,
self for
time, h
and Co
Consequ
needs
least, i
by God
be sanct
vice, i
Observa
or the
require

And as he who first occasions the violation of any of them, is plainly guilty of a very great Sin; so in all Matters that are not particularly and clearly determined by God's Law, we cannot propose a better and safer Rule to our selves, than always to do that which tends most to the Advancement and Preservation of them.

LXII. If some certain time be not determined for Christians to meet together for God's Worship, which every Man may know of before it comes, and accordingly prepare himself for it by laying aside, for that time, his worldly Business: Disorder and Confusion, (which is the natural Consequence of Uncertainty) must needs follow. That one Day, at least, in seven was expressly required by God, under the *Mosaick* Law, to be sanctified and set apart for his Service, is beyond Dispute, That the Observation of the Jewish Sabbath, or the last Day of the Week, is not required from the Christian Church,
to

to me seems very evident from St. *Paul's* reckoning it amongst the transitory *Shadows* of the old Law, *Col. ii. 17.* But that we Christians ought not to be behind hand with the Jews, in setting apart a Proportion of our Time for God's Service, I think will follow, as well from the great Mercies which we have received from him; for which we, no less than they, ought to shew and express our Thankfulness; as also from that general Rule which our Saviour has given us, that our Righteousness should even exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. And that accordingly one Day in seven, namely, the first Day of the Week (which in Scripture is therefore called the Lord's Day, *Rev. i. 10.*) has ever been so set apart for the Service of God in all Christian Churches, I presume will be denied by none; as also that the Reason of the Apostles making choice of this particular Day, was in remembrance of our Saviour's glorious Resurrection

Part I
surrender
perform
in him
confirm
or diffi
can be
why t
any ot
from v
that th
the W
Holy i
particu
of God.
univers
has set
Holy,
of God
Martyr
Saints,
Gospel
mitted i
or, as D
in orde
God fo
there is

urrection, which on that Day was performed, and whereby their Faith in him, which began to waver, was confirmed and raised above all doubt or diffidence. Now since no Reason can be given, or so much as imagined, why this Day should be changed for any other Day of the Week; I do, from what has been said, conclude, that *the Lord's Day*, or first Day of the Week, *ought for ever to be kept Holy in the Christian Church; and particularly dedicated to the Service of God.* And where either the Church, universal, or any particular Church, has set aside any other Days to be kept Holy, in remembrance either of any of God's Mercies to us, or of the Martyrdom of any of his chosen Saints, who sealed the Truth of the Gospel with their Lives, and transmitted it so confirmed down unto us; or, as Days of Fasting or Abstinence, in order to humble our selves before God for our Sins; since in all this there is nothing contrary to God's Law;

Law; nor any thing but what may be well consistent with, and serviceable to true Piety; it will follow from what I have said, § 61. that every Member of such a Church is obliged to keep and observe these same other Holy Days, so far as no way to give Scandal, disturb the Order, or break the Peace of the Church, which has established them.

LXIII. Order and Decency necessarily require that *all the outward Circumstances of Worship*, which God himself has not determined by his own Law, *should be so settled by the Church*, as that all Confusion and Unseemliness therein may, as much as is possible, be avoided. But Care on the other side ought ever to be taken, that Modes and Ceremonies be not so multiplied as to become uneasy and burthensome, or distract the Devotion of the People. Now, there being no such fixed and demonstrable Rules of Decency and Order, but what will have a different Relish with different

Part II
differen
ral Edu
they n
very d
any C
ternal
Fancy,
what f
others
pompo
hend t
of Chr
on as
the C
more,
of her
cannot
Fancy
tified,
the Du
far to
tution
(provi
is sinfu
Unity,
Church

different Men, according to their several Educations, and Customs to which they may have been used; it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for any Church so to regulate these external Matters as to please every Man's Fancy, and give Disgust to none: For what some may think to be but decent, others may take to be too formal or pompous; and what these may apprehend to be suitable to the Simplicity of Christianity, another sort may look on as mean and jejune. As therefore the Church in this Case can do no more, but act according to the best of her Prudence; so since every Man cannot expect to have his particular Fancy in these things pleased and gratified, *it will evidently appear to be the Duty of each private Christian, so far to comply with every such Constitution of the Church where he dwells* (provided there be nothing in it which is sinful) *as not to break the Peace and Unity, or disturb the Order of the Church on that account.* But if any
Church

Church shall offer to impose any Ceremonies or Practices whatsoever (which God has not prescribed, and which therefore are in themselves indifferent) not for Decency and Order, but as things in themselves Holy, or absolutely necessary to Salvation (as some of old would have done by the Jewish Ceremonies,) with such Impositions as these no Christian ought at all to comply; nor suffer his Religion or Conscience to be thus burthened; But *every Man must stand fast in that Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*; tho' at the same time he must be very careful not to pretend, or use this Liberty as a Cloak of Maliciousness.

LXIV, Since different Opinions in Matters of Religion, are generally apt to beget Dissensions and Animosities between those who entertain them, as our daily Experience does abundantly testify; it ought to be the Church's and every private Christian's Endeavour that all Men may become of

one

one and
least th
ferences

*When th
arises,*

and Un

It is fr

any thin

the Ch

cular C

Men w

lish thei

bate. B

to belie

Church

ther tha

of its A

Holy Sc

so is no

or dispu

except t

is injuri

ctice; a

prove p

And th

which

one and the same Judgment, or at least that there may be as few Differences among them, as is possible. *When therefore any religious Dspute arises*, whereby the Church's Peace and Unity is like to be endangered; *It is free and proper for* (nor is there any thing which should hinder) *either the Church universal, or any particular Church*, or even any prudent Men whatsoever, *to declare to publish their Sense of the Matter* in debate. But as no Man can be obliged to believe the Determination of any Church or Party whatsoever, any further than he is convinced and satisfied of its Agreement with Reason and the Holy Scriptures, *Part II. § 1. and 2.* so is not any Man bound to oppose or dispute even against an Error it self, except there be something in it which is injurious to Christian Faith or Practice; and consequently which may prove pernicious to Mens Salvation. And therefore if such a Mistake which may have prevailed in any Church,

Church cannot well be rectified without endangering the Breach of Peace and Charity (because they who hold it, it may be, are obstinately wedded to it) I think *it is the Duty of us all* to be very tender in such a Case, and to permit every Man freely to abound in his own Sense, until such time as God shall think fit to bring them to a clearer Sight of the Truth. And by *no means to renounce the Communion of any Church on the Account of any Error that is not damnable*, and much less on account only of such Terms or Expressions as are but abstruse, or of doubtful Signification. For otherwise since the Apprehensions of Men are so very different, (especially in such things as, being remote from our Senses, are matter only of rational Speculation) if difference of Opinion upon such theological Questions, as do not immediately concern our Salvation, were a sufficient ground of Separation in Point of Communion, there would soon be probably almost as many Churches

Churches
if any C
Man, ei
ctise, any
gainst hi
or Conv
Conscien
or that h
and not
profess t
ctrines as
ver innoc
be to th
and if su
deny her
will not
Terms;
to be exc
Commun
solemnly
fore God
Violation
mands: I
that God
has decla
Damnatio

Churches as Men in the World. But if any Church shall require from a Man, either to comply with, or practise, any thing which is not only against his Fancy in Point of Decency or Convenience, but also against his Conscience in Point of Lawfulness; or that he should not only be silent and not oppose, but also explicitly profess the Belief of any such Doctrines as he judges to be false (however innocent the Belief of them may be to them who think them true) and if such a Church shall refuse and deny her Communion to all those who will not join with her upon these Terms; we must rather be contented to be excluded from such a Church's Communion, than to purchase it by solemnly telling a downright Lye before God and the World, or by the Violation of any other of God's Commands: For if we offer to do Evil that Good may come of it, *St. Paul* has declared us to be in a State of Damnation.

LXV. For the due Regulation of every Society, it is necessary that it have a Power somewhere or other vested in it over its own Members, either to compel them to live orderly, according to its Laws and Constitutions, or, if any of them are disobedient and refractory, and will not, upon due Admonition, be reclaimed, wholly to exclude them from the Body of the Community. For, otherwise, if the Members of any Society may, at their Pleasure, break its Constitutions, and violate its Laws without controul, this would be wholly to pull down the Enclosure, and lay all open and common, as before; and consequently in effect, to dissolve the Society it self. And accordingly *our Saviour has given the Church a Power to admonish and rebuke those who give any scandal by their ungodly and unruly Behaviour; and if upon this, they do not repent and reform, of rejecting and cutting them off from her Communion.* Which
 Autho-

Authority must ever be exercised with due Mildness and Caution, for the Edification, and not with Heat and Fury, which in the End would more probably tend to the Destruction of the Church. But if any Church shall go beyond this, to punish or persecute Men with Fire and Sword, or with Fines and Imprisonment, only for being of a different Persuasion from and refusing to communicate with her; in my Opinion she herein acts contrary to that Mildness and Gentleness, which the Gospel, upon all Occasions prescribes, and particularly in the Case of dealing with those who oppose themselves to it, *2 Tim.* ii. 24. Altho' at the same Time it cannot be denied, but that if any Man, under the Pretence of Conscience, or Religion, shall advance such Doctrines, or do such Acts as are destructive to the Peace or safety of the civil State or Commonwealth; the civil Magistrate may, and ought to punish such Person according to the Laws of the

Land, notwithstanding all his Pretences. For if the Plea of Conscience (the Truth of which can only be known to Almighty God) be sufficient to save any Malefactor from Punishment, no civil Society can ever be safe, and all human Laws and Magistrates would be wholly useless. See *Part I* § 35.

LXVI. And as Almighty God, in his Mercy, is pleased not to cut the greatest Sinners off from all Hopes of Pardon; but is ready at any time upon their true and sincere Repentance, to receive them again into his Favour, so has he committed unto the Church the Ministry of Reconciliation; which Church therefore accordingly ought not only to endeavour to bring Sinners to Repentance by Preaching, Admonition, and Exhortation; but also wherever she sees evident Marks and Tokens of it in any Person (of which yet there ought to be good assurance) for his greater comfort and ease of Conscience, to remit or ab-

solv

solve h
him aga
of Chri
suppose
been de
tence of
mitting
duly an
Church
sures us
firmed b
a Man
Confessi
ther Per
obtain t
from th
serted in
Reason v
alledge f
cluding:
Confessio
may be
dened I
tion, and
Life) wh
without

olve him from *his Sins*, and restore him again to the Benefit and Privilege of *Christian Communion*, of which I suppose that he has, or ought to have been deprived: And whatever Sentence of thus binding or loosing, remitting or retaining of Mens Sins, is duly and regularly pronounced by the Church upon Earth, our Saviour assures us it shall be ratified and confirmed by God in Heaven. But that a Man is obliged to make a particular Confession of all his Sins unto any other Person, except God, in order to obtain the Pardon of, or Absolution from them; as I no where find it asserted in the Holy Scripture; so the Reason which the *Roman* Divines do alledge for it, is very weak and unconvincing: For it is not the particular Confession of a Man's Sins (which may be performed by the most hardened Impenitent) but his Contrition, and the visible Reformation of his Life) which may sufficiently appear without a particular Confession) that

only can enable the Church, or her Ministers, to judge whether he truly repents of his Sins, or not, and consequently, whether he be a proper Object of God's Mercy, and the Church's Favour. Altho' I deny not but that in some Cases it may be very proper for a Man to make known the Diseases of his Soul, to a prudent Spiritual Physician, that he may have his Advice for the Cure of them. And his Duty also to make an open Confession of his Sins whenever it is necessary for God's Glory, or to repair any publick Scandal which has been given by him.

LXVII. That Almighty God even where he has pardoned a Man's Sins upon his true Repentance, may yet, on the Score of those very Sins which he has so pardoned, lay some sharp and severe temporal Afflictions upon the Penitent, either to keep him more effectually from sinning for the time to come, or that it may be a Terror to others, or for many other Reasons best.

best known
cannot
to infer
ons, if
are to b
that th
them,
nance sh
tisfacti
way of
out any
ture, t
Conseq
Texts;
precari
how M
so grof
soever
weak C
lates do
sing an
Christ
Indulge
the ke
Lock
infinite

best known to himself, is a thing that cannot be disputed. But from hence to infer that these temporal Afflictions, if not laid on us in this World, are to be undergone in Purgatory, and that therefore, for the preventing them, it is fit and necessary *that Penance should be imposed by way of satisfaction, or Indulgences granted by way of Remission*: And all this without any Warrant from the Holy Scripture, save only a faint and forced Consequence from some few preverted Texts; *is a thing so groundless and precarious*, that it amazes me to think how Men can suffer themselves to be so grossly imposed upon. And whosoever shall duly consider upon what weak Grounds the Pope and his Prelates do pretend to a Power of dispensing and distributing the Merits of *Christ* unto the People, by way of Indulgence (as if they alone had the keeping of that Treasure under Lock and Key; and to which, tho' infinite, they have yet added the Me-

rits of the Saints, to make their Treasure more abundant) will, I think, very much wonder that their People should be so free to part with their earthly Treasure in purchasing these Indulgences upon no better Security.

LXVIII. That the Apostles of *Christ*, when they were first sent abroad to preach the glad Tidings of the Gospel, did anoint many sick Persons with Oyl, and thereby miraculously heal them, we are plainly told by St. *Mark* ch. vi. § 13. And that in this they do no more than what *Christ* himself had expressly commanded them, is most reasonable and probable to suppose. Moreover, that the anointing with Oyl, which is mention'd by St. *James*, ch. v. § 14. was intended for the very same Purpose, viz. the raising up the sick Person and restoring him to Health, is as apparent as any thing can be from the very Context. But as we do not find that this anointing of the sick was

was ap
Apostl
Ordina
Church
that th
thereby
see no
should
what ju
can ha
other I
vine In
ction,
far diff
ring the
Hopes
sage int
I am ab

be but a
if it w
several
sary for
vation:
would
there w

was appointed either by *Christ* or his Apostles, *as a standing and perpetual Ordinance for ever to be used in the Church*; so since Experience shews, that the miraculous effect of healing thereby is now wholly ceased; I can see no Reason why the Practice itself should be any longer continued. But what just Ground the Church of *Rome* can have from either of these, or any other Place of Scripture for the Divine Institution of their extreme Unction, which they make use of for a far different end, namely, the preparing thereby of Persons who are past Hopes of Recovery, for their Passage into the next Life, is more than I am able to find out.

LXIX. As the Body-Natural would be but a confused and useless Lump, if it were not distinguished into the several Members which are necessary for its own Service and Preservation: And as the Body-Politick would be a disorderly Rabble, if there were not Magistrates settled to

rule and govern, and Ministerial Officers appointed to perform all necessary Functions in and about it; so the Holy Scripture, as well as Reason, assures us (and the Practice of the Apostolical Church, which is there recorded, confirms it) that the like Appointment and Distinction of Offices are no less necessary in the Church; in order to the regular and orderly Government of it, and the due Execution of all its Laws and Constitutions. But how far these Offices are limited and appointed by the Law of God, or how far left to be settled and determined by the Prudence of the Church, according as Circumstances may render it convenient, is what I shall not take upon me to pronounce my Sentence in. But *whatever Polity or Ecclesiastical Constitution is settled and acquiesced in, either by the whole Church in general, or by that of any Nation or Country in particular, I think, ought quietly to be submitted to by every one who would be*
a Member

a Member of such respective Church, except there appears to him to be either something therein, which is not only uncommanded, but even contrary to the Law of God; or else something wanting, which God requires, and therefore is absolutely necessary to be maintain'd and kept up in all Churches. Nor can I apprehend that any less Warrant can be sufficient for breaking or endangering the Peace or Unity of the Church (the Preservation of which is so often and so earnestly recommended to us in the Holy Scripture) besides the absolute Necessity of obeying the positive Command of God himself. And therefore, since the Government of the Church by Bishops, that is to say, by certain Persons, having in their several Districts a Priority among, and in some Respects a Superiority over, the Presbyters, has for so many Ages been universally settled amongst, and acquiesced in by all Christians in all Parts of the World; I cannot find

how they can be excused, who (without any necessity for so doing) have so earnestly set themselves, not only to retrench the Excesses, and rectify the Abuses of the Episcopal Power; but also to pull down, and wholly abolish the very Order itself; to the no small Scandal of those who think that so universal a Constitution, every where taking Place even in the Primitive Church, could be grounded on no less than an Apostolick Ordinance (of which there seem to be some, not obscure, Footsteps in the Scriptures of the New Testament) and that most probable in Conformity to that Imparity which *Christ* himself established between the Apostles and the Seventy Disciples; who were yet both commissioned by him to preach the Gospel.

LXX. How far a Case of Necessity may, upon some Occasions, excuse or justify a Man for taking on him an Office which regularly does not belong to him, especially if his Design therein

Part I
therein
know
where
justly
ought
cal F
Office,
thereu
and ac
tution.
not ca
of Offi
is in e
wide
and A
side,
ken b
be ent
but fu
and th
vided
son, a
ted to
God,
ction,
and f

therein be truly honest and sincere, I know not. But in a settled Church, where no such Necessity can fairly and justly be pleaded, no Man certainly ought to intrude into any Ecclesiastical Function; or exercise any such Office, who is not called and admitted thereunto by the lawful Authority, and according to the established Constitutions of the Society. For if this be not carefully observed, the Distinction of Offices and Functions in the Church is in effect wholly taken away; and a wide Door opened for Confusion and Anarchy. But then on the other side, good Care, ought ever to be taken by the Church, that no Persons be entrusted with any sacred Office, but such as are duly qualified for it; and that such a Maintenance be provided and settled for every such Person, as that he may not be necessitated to neglect the publick Service of God, and the due Exercise of his Function, by being constrained to bestow and spend overmuch of his Time and Labour

Labour in getting a Living for himself and his Family.

LXXI. I have now gone thro' what I at first design'd; and have not, that I know of, omitted any one thing which I could judge to be a material or necessary part of Religion; altho' I have on purpose endeavoured to avoid the Use of some Words which do frequently occur in all or most Systems of Divinity that I have met with; and the Reason why I have so done, is not that I find fault with the Words themselves; but because I would have my Reader take notice, that *Religion does not consist in Terms of Art, or Forms of Expression*; but in the Belief and Practice of such things as God has made known, and requires from us: and it is too common among Men to wrangle about Words, before they have clearly fixed and agreed upon the Meaning of them. I have not, for Example, made use of this Term *Justification*; but yet I have endeavoured to
shew

shew upon what Conditions a Sinner obtains the Pardon of his Sins, and Mercy, at the Hand of God; which is the same thing: Nor have I said any thing of the Nature or Number of *Sacraments*; but I have spoken what I thought might be necessary concerning Baptism, the Holy Communion, and those other things which the Church of *Rome* calls by that Name. And if once I am satisfied touching any thing, how far God requires it from us, and whether or no it be necessary to Salvation; I cannot see why I should trouble myself much in enquiring, whether such a thing may properly be called a Sacrament or not, which to me seems no more but a dispute about the Meaning of a Word. True indeed it is, that in the Doctrine of the Trinity, which I have delivered *Part II.* § 22. I have expressly made use of the Terms *Person*, *Substance*, &c. because I could find none others so fit and proper to express my Thoughts;
nor

274 A Gentleman's &c. Part III.
nor durst I venture in so sublime a
Matter to apply new Words to those
things of which I can have but very
imperfect and obscure Conceptions.
And having thus said all that I intend
upon this Occasion, I freely submit
the Whole to the Judgment and Cen-
sure of every Reader; leaving to him
that Liberty which I myself always
desire to enjoy: and being ready to
retract any thing that I have said,
whenever I am convinced that I
have been therein mistaken.



A N

APPENDIX

TO A

GENTLEMAN'S Religion.

In which it is prov'd,

That nothing contrary to our Reason can possibly be the Object of our Belief; but that it is no just Exception against some of the Doctrines of Christianity, that they are above our Reason.

I. **H**OW those Persons, who take unto themselves the distinguishing Name of Unitarians, do dissent from the main Body of Christians, of whatsoever Church

Church or Persuasion, touching the Doctrines of the Trinity, and the Incarnation of our Saviour *Christ*, is so well known, that I need not here offer to open or explain the Terms of the Controversy which is manag'd between them. Now when in this Dispute the *Unitarians* are press'd with some Passages of Scripture, which seem very evidently to make against them, besides other ways which they have to avoid the Force of them, they commonly have recourse to the Nature of the thing controverted; and press their Adversaries back again with this Demand, How such a thing can possibly be? And when to this it is reply'd, That there is evidently no Contradiction to sound Reason in the Doctrines themselves, and that the Truth of them ought to be believ'd upon the Authority of God, who hath reveal'd them: But that the Manner of them is utterly above, and altogether incomprehensible to our finite and narrow Understandings, and therefore

there
return
maint
not co
is a
that
For
son (t
Conce
furd,
to bel
ly and
appre

II.

ing of
given
Relig
§ 2, 2
most
ty, a
which
this
unto
Under
a mo
try if

therefore not to be enquired after; In return to this, there are some who maintain, that if these Doctrines were not contrary to Reason, yet this alone is a sufficient Cause to reject them, that they are confessedly above it. For of that which is above our Reason (say they) we can form no true Conception or Idea; and it is absurd, or rather impossible for a Man to believe that which he cannot clearly and plainly so much as conceive or apprehend.

II. For the right stating and clearing of this whole Controversy, I have given such hints in the *Gentleman's Religion*, Part I. § 33. and Part II. § 2, 22, 23, 37. as I thought to be most fit for Men of ordinary Capacity, and most suitable to that Brevity which I all along design'd. But in this *Appendix* I shall address myself unto those who are of a more refined Understanding, and accusom'd to a more exact way of thinking; and try if I can give them any Satisfaction in

in a Matter which seems to be not a little perplexed, perhaps by the over-much Curiosity of some of both the contending Parties.

III. That our Knowledge of things is but short and imperfect, is confess'd on all sides. It is also very evident, that no Language whatsoever will afford us variety of Words sufficient to express all the Diversities and Peculiarities of our Thoughts, so as to secure them from the Mistakes of Ignorance or Misapprehension, and the Cavils of Perverseness; but that after all our Care our most cautious Expressions will sometimes be liable to be mis-interpreted to a contrary, or at least wrested to a different Meaning from what we intended. And therefore the most acute and judicious Writer will probably find himself much mistaken, If he at any time hopes so to handle any Controversy as to satisfy every Man. But since, upon the strictest Examination which I have been able to make, I am, myself

self fully convinced of the Truth of what I have concluded in this Dispute, I will now, (with God's Assistance) try, whether I can express my Thoughts with so much Clearness, and prove them with such sufficient Arguments, and pertinent Instances, as may give some Satisfaction to others also: And that I may the more effectually do this, I shall endeavour to proceed, as near as I can, in such a Method as is always us'd in Mathematical Demonstrations.

IV. This Word *Doctrine* is but another Term for a *Proposition*; and what a *Proposition* is, or when it is said to be true or false, certain, probable, or doubtful, I need not spend Time to explain.

V. *Reason* is that Faculty in Man (for I meddle not with the Knowledge of Angels) whereby he apprehends things and their Attributes or Properties, and frames a Judgment concerning what he apprehends. And also from those Judgments which he
makes,

makes, draws sometimes more immediate, or more remote and distant Consequences.

VI. The Truth of some Propositions is so very plain, that as no Man in his Senses can deny them, so it is impossible to find out any thing which is more plain whereby to prove them. And such Propositions as these I call *self-evident*: Such for Example are, That *all the Parts of a thing taken together, are equal to the whole*, That *both Parts of a Contradiction cannot be true at the same Time*; and the like.

VII. When the Truth of a Proposition does not immediately appear by its own Light, but yet the Proposition can, beyond Question, be prov'd from other Propositions which are self-evident; such a Proposition as this I term to be *built upon Reason alone*. Such, for instance, are, That *two Triangles having equal Bases, and being contain'd between the same parallel Lines, are equal*; and all other

Propo-

Proposit
ing den
from th

VIII
Proposit
Contrad
ed from
lone, b
Reality
made a
this I
Thus
/ould
Stature
is to fa
as that
hundre
Motion
Motion
but th
cannot
drawn

IX.
immed
in its C
tradiet

Propositions which are capable of being demonstrated, or clearly proved from the bare Principles of Reason.

VIII. Where the Possibility of a Proposition (*i. e.* that it implies no Contradiction) can be evidently proved from the Principles of Reason alone, but yet the actual Truth and Reality of it cannot the same way be made appear; such a Proposition as this I call *reconcilable to Reason*. Thus for Example, That *an Oak should grow up to its full and usual Stature in an Hour*, is as possible (that is to say, as free from Contradiction) as that it should do the same in an hundred Years; (for all growth is Motion, and the Swiftneſs of the Motion may be for ever encreas'd) but that ever this was actually ſo, cannot be prov'd by any Arguments drawn from Reason.

IX. Where any Proposition (either immediately in it ſelf, or mediately in its Conſequences) does plainly contradict any other Proposition, which is
either

either self-evident, or built upon Reason, such a Proposition as this I term to be *contrary to Reason*; such for Example is this Proposition, That *the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to three right Angles*; and such like.

X. Where a Proposition is in it self true, but we are unable clearly to apprehend or frame a Notion or Conception of the things contain'd under the Terms of it, such a Proposition I term to be *above Reason*. And a Proposition may be either wholly and altogether above our Reason, when we can frame no manner of Conception of the things spoken of; or else but partly above it, when we have some Notions of the things, but those very obscure and imperfect. Thus the Doctrine of Light and Colours, is wholly above the Reason of a Man born blind, who can frame no manner of Notion of these things, from the Description which others make of them, because he is altogether destitute of proper Organs, to receive

receive any Impression from the things themselves. But the same Doctrine would not be so much above the Reason of a Man, who had some faint and confus'd Glimmering of Sight, tho' still much more above his Reason, as it would be if he were endow'd with the Faculty of clear and distinct Sight, as other Men commonly are.

XI. To *know*, is to give Assent to a Proposition, when it evidently appears to be built upon Reason. But when the Truth of a Proposition is assented to, not upon Arguments drawn from the Reason, or the Nature of the thing, but upon Account of the Veracity and Authority of the Person or Persons who affirm it; such a Proposition as that is said to be *believed*. Furthermore, if a Man understands not the Meaning of a Proposition, and yet believes that it contains a Truth in it, because of the Deference he pays to the Person who speaks it; this I call an *Implicit Belief*:

lief: And, properly speaking, the Object of such a Belief is not the Truth of the Proposition itself, but only the Veracity of the Speaker. But where a Man understands the Meaning of the Proposition, which he believes, this I call an *Explicit Belief*.

XII. No Man can possibly believe or give his Assent to any Doctrine or Proposition which appears to him to be contrary to Reason (see § 9.) For to own a Proposition to be self-evident, or built upon Reason, and yet at the same time to believe another, which mediately or immediately is contradictory to it, is absolutely impossible.

XIII. If a Proposition be reconcilable to Reason, (§ 8.) and the Truth of it also testified by such Persons whose Veracity is beyond all Doubt or Exception; such a Proposition cannot but be believed by any one unto whom it comes so testified. For if it be reconcilable to Reason, then it may possibly be true, (§ 8.)

and i
Verac
who
lieve
think
lation
may j
as a M
a Mo
late A
XIV
terial
what
pear,
most s
to give
as are
and
(§ 10.
evincin
to mak
which
to who
had be
fancy,
have
an

and if I am actually convinc'd of the Veracity of the Person or Persons who relate it, I cannot chuse but believe that it is true. From whence I think it evidently follows, that Revelation, or the Testimony of another, may justly be looked upon, not only as a *Means of Information*, but also as a *Motive of Persuasion*, whatever a late Author says to the contrary.

XIV. But that which is most material in this present Controversy, is what I am now going to make appear, viz. That a Man may have most sufficient and cogent Arguments, to give his Assent to such Propositions as are not only in part, but wholly and altogether above his Reason, (§ 10.) For the clear and plain evincing of which, I shall crave leave to make a Relation of a Conference which once I had with a blind Man; to whom, when I understood that he had been quite blind from his Infancy, and never could remember to have seen the least glimmering of

N 2

Light,

Light, I had the Curiosity to put several Questions. I ask'd him, first of all, Whether ever he had endeavour'd to frame any Notion or Conception of Light or Colours, of which, I suppose, he had often heard mention to be made in common Discourse? To which he answer'd me, That he had often endeavour'd it with the greatest Application of his Mind that possibly he could. And to that End and Purpose he had made it his Business to ask all the Questions he could think of, whereby to get Information, but all to no purpose; for that he was still altogether as ignorant of the Nature of Light and Colours, and as unable to frame any Conception of them, as if he had never before heard the Names of them. He told me moreover, that he was a long time before he would or could believe, that other Men had any Faculty at all which he wanted. For, says he, I was sensible of no Defect or Imperfection in my self, but believ'd

liev'd myself to be altogether as perfect as all other Men with whom I convers'd; and therefore when they told me that I was blind, and talk'd to me of Light and Colours, I apprehended, for a great while, that they did it only to impose upon me. But are you now convinced, said I, that you are blind; and that other Men have the Faculty of Sight, which you want? Yes, reply'd he, I am fully satisfy'd and convinc'd of it. How can that be, said I, when you can frame no manner of Notion of Light or Colours, which are the Objects of Sight? Thus, answer'd he, I was convinc'd of it: They would put me at a Distance from them, and yet would tell me every thing that I did; as whether I stood or sat, or held up my Hand or let it down, or the like; Whereas I could not discover any thing which they did, except I were close to to them, and felt them carefully with my Hands. Now by this, continued he, I am fully

convinc'd, that other Men have a Faculty which I want, whereby they can discover and distinguish things at a distance, which they call *Sight*: And I am told by all Men, that there is something call'd *Light*, which is diffus'd thro' the Air, and is the Instrument whereby they are enabled to exercise this Faculty; and also that the *Colour* and *Shape* of things are the Objects upon which the same is employ'd. But altho' I can by my *Touch* distinguish between the different shapes of some things, and so can frame a Notion of *Shape*: Yet what *Light* is, or what *Colours* are, I have not the least Conception; altho' I am, as I have told you, sufficiently convinc'd, that some such things there are. Now, this Relation being (for the Substance of it) true, to my own Knowledge; or at least (as every Man will own it to be) possible and rational, it will evidently follow, without any further Proof, that this Man had very good
and

and un
lieve for
above 1
Light c
terly un
ceiving
were f
heard M
not m
time ap
to him
reasona
been a
his Af
his, w
a bare
he ha
exist,
was a
signify
land f
lutely
direct
thing
logou
made

and unquestionable Grounds to believe some things that were altogether above his Reason; for what Sight, Light or Colours were, he was utterly incapable of framing, or receiving any Idea. But yet that there were such things, and that all he heard Men discourse about them was not mere Fiction, (as he for some time apprehended) was plainly prov'd to him by such Arguments as every reasonable Man must allow to have been abundantly sufficient to move his Assent. Nor was this Assent of his, which he gave unto these things, a bare implicit Belief, § 11. as if he had been told that something did exist, which was called *Blictri*; but was altogether ignorant of what was signify'd by that Word, (as Mr. Toland speaks.) For altho' it was absolutely impossible for him to frame any direct Notion, or Conception, of the things themselves, yet by those analogous Representations which were made to him of them, he well might be,

and was accordingly, not only fully convinced that what was spoken concerning them, was not insignificant Nonsense; but also enabled to frame some sort of representative Conception of them, which is more than a Man can do of *Blietri*, of which he hears only the Sound, but knows not the Signification. For, supposing a Man at the very Time of his Birth, to be utterly depriv'd of his Organs of Sight; yet by the use of his other four Senses, he may well conceive what a Faculty of Sensation is; and how a sensible Quality, or the small Particles of Matter flowing or rebounding from a Body, and striking upon the proper Organ of Sense, do make such a peculiar Impression upon it, as to affect our Understanding with some particular Knowledge of the Body itself, whereby we are enabled to distinguish it from other Bodies. And as he can directly apply all this to the Senses of Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching, of which he

may

may be
than oth
logy fr
able to
Repres
of thin
and C
particul
them,
them. S
tise of
Spanish
absolut
shot of
not h
speak
Motio
fectly
that h
whole
the D
must
above
Light
blind
spoke

may be as good, or a better Master than other Men; so, by way of Analogy from these Senses he will be able to make some imperfect sort of Representation to himself, what sort of thing Sight is, and what Light and Colours are; tho' directly, and particularly, he knows no more of them, than if he had never heard of them. Sir *Kenelm Digby*, in his *Treatise of Bodies, Chap. 28.* tells us of a *Spanish* Nobleman who was born so absolutely Deaf, that if a Gun were shot off, close by his Ear, he could not hear it; and yet was taught to speak very distinctly; and, by the Motion of any Man's Mouth, so perfectly to understand what he said, as that he would not lose a Word in a whole Day's Conversation. Now, the Doctrine of Sounds and Musick must of necessity have been as much above this Man's Reason, as that of Light and Colours was above the blind Man's, of whom I but now spoke; and yet there might very

good Assurance have been given to the one, that there was such a Sense as Hearing, and such a thing as a Sound, as well as there was unto the other, in the Case of Light and Colours.

XV. And now to apply what has been said to the Controversy concerning the Trinity and Incarnation of our Saviour. And here the Issue which I am now trying, presupposes these three Things: *First*, that the Texts of Scripture which are brought to prove the Truth of these Doctrines, are sufficient for the Purpose for which they are alledged, if we Interpret them according to the natural Order, and usual Signification of the Words and Expressions of them. *Secondly*, That the Doctrines themselves are not contrary to Reason, as not implying any Contradiction; see *Part II.* § 22. But *Thirdly*, That they are altogether above our Reason, because we cannot frame any Notion or Idea of that particular Union, and Distinction which is between the three Persons

sons of
between the
our Lord
things b
Question
Whether
for a M
Doctrine
nation o
bove his
XVI.
it is ve
cannot b
things t
understa
in whic
sed, as
are not
Words
and sig
is we k
what f
Son, a
how t
between
fully c

sons of the blessed Trinity, or between the two Natures which are in our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Which three things being taken for granted, the Question that is to be determined, is, Whether or no it be a sufficient ground for a Man to deny his Assent to the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation of *Christ*, because they are above his Reason?

XVI. And here in the first place, it is very plain, that although we cannot by any Means comprehend the things themselves, yet we do so far understand the Meaning of the Terms in which these Doctrines are expressed, as clearly to perceive, that they are not a Company of insignificant Words put together, to make a Sound, and signifie nothing. What a *Person* is we know, though we cannot tell what sort of Persons the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are; and how their personal Distinction between themselves, particularly and fully differs from that of Men, one

from another. What it is to be *One*, we well understand, although we cannot frame an Idea of that special Union which is between those Divine Persons. What it is for one Being to *generate* another, and what to *proceed* from another, we are not ignorant; although the peculiar Manner of the Generation of the Son of God, and the Proceſſion of the Holy Ghost, be beyond our Capacity to conceive. And laſtly, What it is for two Beings to be *united* together, we can very well apprehend; although we pretend not to know the Manner of that Union which is between the two Natures in the Perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*. From whence it plainly follows, that theſe Doctrines, tho' *above our Reaſon*, do yet ſo far ſtand upon equal Terms with thoſe Doctrines which I have termed, *reconcilable to Reaſon*, § 8. That as our Reaſon may be plainly and poſitively convinced from its own Principles alone, of the *Poſſibility* of the one; ſo is there no Principle of

our Reaſon
to prove
bility in
is no C
in a Doctr
low, tha
poſſibly
Man is c
a Doctrin
Doctrin
by any
cannot e
he cann
it; as I
Veracity
of doubt
by both
of, as n
Doctrin
which
vealed
Since w
ctrine o
Incarna
them c
ſibility

our Reason which can reach so far as to prove or demonstrate any *Impossibility* in the other. And where there is no Contradiction or Impossibility in a Doctrine, it will undeniably follow, that that same Doctrine may possibly be true. And wherever a Man is convinced of the Possibility of a Doctrine, if the Truth of that same Doctrine appears to him to be testified by any Person, of whose Veracity he cannot entertain any manner of doubt, he cannot refuse to give his Assent to it; as I have said, § 13. Since then the Veracity of God admits of no manner of doubt, and the Holy Scriptures are by both Parties in this Dispute allowed of, as most authentick Records of the Doctrines of Faith, and Rules of Life, which God has made known and revealed to the World. And lastly, Since we here suppose, that the Doctrine of the Trinity, and that of the Incarnation of *Christ*, do neither of them contain, or imply, any Impossibility or Contradiction, although they

they are both of them above our Reason; it will follow, that if all, or any of the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove these Doctrines, being expounded according to the common way of interpreting all Books, (of which see *Part I.* § 25.) do fairly (and without being wrested) contain (either in themselves, or their evident Consequences) those same Doctrines which they are alledged to establish; there can be no just Cause why any Man should deny his Assent to them. But if, notwithstanding all this, it be still urged, that it is not possible for a Man explicitly to believe a thing of which he can frame no Conception or Idea: I must refer him to the Story of the blind Man, § 14. which seems to me abundantly to evince the contrary. And why we should not believe the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, upon the Testimony of the Holy Scriptures as well as the blind Man did the Existence of Light and Colours, upon the

the Testim
ed with
which I h
can see no
XVII.
III. § 71.
der that I
use of cer
the Reaso
desire him
like Reaso
and in this
as to men
bout whic
late been
Term My
New Te
(and no
understood
Or, whet
a very all
so there
count of
know the
but as in
ly, Whe

the Testimony of other Men, joined with that collateral Experiment which I have mentioned; I profess I can see no manner of reason.

XVII. And as in my Book, *Part III. § 71*. I have advertised my Reader that I have purposely avoided the use of certain Words and Terms, for the Reason there given; so must I desire him to take notice that for the like Reason, I have both in my Book, and in this *Appendix*, omitted so much as to mention the Word *Mystery*, about which so great a Noise has of late been made. Whether this same Term *Mystery*, be always used in the New Testament, in the very same (and no other) Signification as it is understood by Heathen Authors: Or, whether other sorts of things, by a very allowable Analogy, are not also there called Mysteries, upon account of their Obscurity; because *we know them but in part: and see them but as in a Glass darkly*: Or, lastly, Whether there be any thing in
Christi-

Christianity, which may *properly* be called a *Mystery* according to the genuine Meaning of that Term; to me seems to be no more but a Contention *about a Word*, which the Apostle expressly forbids, 2 *Tim.* ii. 14. But whatever may be determined concerning the Propriety of the Word, the thing itself seems to me to be very evident, that there are some Doctrines in Christianity, which are above our Reason, and yet that this is no sufficient Ground for the Denial of our Assent to them.

XVIII. And if I am told, that after all this there is no greater Obscurity in any of the Doctrines of Christianity, than what there is in all natural Beings, with which we most familiarly converse; whose *real Essence* we cannot penetrate, but must content our selves with a sort of superficial Knowledge of them, which is caused by those Impressions which they make upon our outward Organs; which, at most, can be termed but a
nominal

nominal
of *Grass*
ther nat
Account
ous, as t
Religion
it might
Men fo
every ot
somethin
son, and
ing cann
will no
gion.

XIX.

ed, that
positions
§ 15, w
by the
far from
ture, w
Doctrin
nation,
that pu
they do
underta

nominal Essence; so that even a *spire of Grass, a Stick, a Stone*, or any other natural Being, may, upon this Account as truly be termed *Mysterious*, as the most sublime Doctrines of Religion: I shall only answer, that it mightily raises my Wonder, to hear Men so freely acknowledge, that in every other thing whatsoever, there is something which is above their Reason, and to which their Understanding cannot reach; and yet, that they will not allow the same in Religion.

XIX. But I know it will be objected, that the first of those three Suppositions, which I have laid down, § 15, will, by no Means be granted by the *Unitarians*; for they are so far from allowing the Texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, to be any way sufficient to that purpose; that, on the contrary, they do, with the greatest Assurance, undertake to bring other and contrary
Inter-

Interpretations of those very Passages, which they pretend to be far more rational and natural. To which I shall only answer, that this is all that I aim at in this *Appendix*, that the Issue of these Controversies may be placed upon that which is the only true Foundation for it; I mean the Authority of the Holy Scriptures; and that blind Men would not take upon them, by the Strength of their Reason to discuss Problems, and frame Conclusions concerning Light and Colours, of which they can have no true or sufficient Idea. I am very sensible that Learned Men, who have their Minds strongly prepossessed with any Opinion, may by their Criticisms and Paraphrases, and such like Engines, torture and screw almost any Text of Scripture, till they make it look with another Aspect from what is truly its own, and seem to confess what really it never thought or meant. But if we would always take those Interpretations which flow of themselves, and not

not those
from the
the fairest
Speeches
I cannot
can other
the Doctrin
carnation,
II. § 22,

not those which are violently pressed from the Scripture, (which I think is the fairest way of expounding all Speeches and Discourses whatsoever) I cannot for my Part, see how we can otherwise conclude, concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation, than as I have done, *Part II.* § 22, 37.

F I N I S.



**Books Printed for T. TRYE, near
Grays-Inn Gate in Holbourn.**

I. PLAINE *Instructions* for the Young and Ignorant, comprised in a short and easy Exposition of the Church, Catechism, adapted to the Understanding and Memory of those of the meanest Capacity. The seventh Edition. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred.

II. Some short and plain *Directions* for spending one Day well, by which (if every Day carefully observed) a Man may be much enabled (through God's Grace) to spend his whole Life well. The seventh Edition. Price 1d. or 6s. per Hundred.

III. An *Essay* towards making the Knowledge of Religion easy to the meanest Capacity: Being a short and plain Account of the Doctrines and Rules of Christianity. The seventh Edition. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

IV. An Answer to all the *Excuses* and *Pretences* which Men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion: To which is added, A brief Account of the End and Design of the Holy Communion, the Obligation to receive it, the Way to prepare for it, and the Behaviour of ourselves both at and after it. The fifteenth Edition. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred.

N. B. This Book (necessary to be read on the Approach of every Sacrament Day throughout the Year, by all Sorts and Degrees of People) is also printed in a neat Pocket Size, in this

(Large Letter.)

for the Curious, Aged, and such as cannot use a small Print, Price neatly bound in black Calf 1s. bound

bound p
on the
buy Nut
V. A Hel
Prayer. The
Hundred.

VI. Some
shewing the
moniously.
fines. 5. I
of Business.
Hundred.

VII. The
ed out. Price

VIII. Th
Way of bani
ing the Cons
Christian Du
or 1l. 5s. per

IX. A ple
of moderate C
in all Things
tion: To wh
nasmus's Cree
3s. per Doze

X. A Per
tures: In a
Church of
dred.

XI. Cath
lessening the
sians. The
Hundred.

XII. A
Christianity
them, With
ciples laid c

bound plain. 8d. and sewed in blue Paper, cut on the Edges 6d. with Allowance to such as buy Numbers thereof.

V. A Help to the *devout Performance of private Prayer*. The *second Edition*. Price 1d. or 6s. per Hundred.

VI. Some *Rules for the Conduct of Human Life*, shewing the Way of *Living*: 1. Wisely. 2. Harmoniously. 3. Peaceably and Quietly. 4. In Business. 5. In much Business. 6. In the Intervals of Business. 7. In Travel. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred.

VII. The *Way to Eternal Salvation plainly pointed out*. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

VIII. The Rule of *Self-Examination*, or the only Way of banishing Doubts and Scruples, and directing the *Conscience* in the *satisfactory Practice* of all Christian Duties. The *second Edition*. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

IX. A *plain and easy Method*, whereby a *Man of moderate Capacity* may arrive at full *Satisfaction* in all Things that concern his *Everlasting Salvation*: To which is added a *Paraphrase* on St. *Athanasius's Creed*. The *second Edition*. Price 6d. or 5s. per Dozen.

X. A *Persuasive* to the *Study of the Holy Scriptures*: In a Letter to a sober Gentleman of the Church of *Rome*. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

XI. *Catholick Christianity*, or an *Essay* towards lessening the *Number of Controversies* among *Christians*. The *second Edition*. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

XII. A *Brief Discourse of the Fundamentals of Christianity*; and the *Use* that is to be made of them, With an *Appendix*, in which from the *Principles* laid down or suggested in the *Discourse*, an
Answer

Answer is given to three important Questions; the Determination whereof would much conduce to the restoring Communion between different Churches. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

XIII. The true Nature of an Oath. Price 1d. or 6s. per Hundred.

XIV. A Charitable Address to all who are of the Communion of the Church of Rome. Price 1s.

XV. An Answer to two Objections made against the Charitable Address, to all who are of the Communion of the Church of Rome. Price 6d.

XVI. Free-thinking in Matters of Religion stated and recommended. The second Edition. Price 4d.

XVII. The Authority of the Church in Matters of Religion. The second Edition. Price 4d.

XVIII. Eternal Salvation the only End and Design of Religion. Price 3d.

XIX. The Divine Authority of Church Government and Episcopacy stated and asserted upon Principles common to all Christians. Price 4d.

XX. A Sermon preached before the House of Commons at St. Andrew's Church Dublin, October 23. 1711. Price 3d.

XXI. The Wisdom of being Religious. A Sermon preached at the Castle Chappel in Dublin, Feb. 20, 1703-4. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred.

XXII. *Honesty the best Policy*; an Essay concerning the true Way of rendering a Nation happy, and its Government firm and lasting. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXIII. A Gentleman's Religion, in three Parts: The first contains the Principles of Natural Religion; the second and third the Doctrines of Christianity both as to Faith and Practice. With an Appendix, wherein it is proved, that nothing contrary to our Reason can possibly be the Object of our Belief; but that it is no just Exception against

against some
they are a
Price 2s. b

XXIV.
other on C
stance of
While Men
among the
5s. per Doz

XXV. S
gion opene
Price 4d. o

XXVI.
impartial
Price 6d. o

XXVII.
clear Ligh
racter of a
The second
dred.

XXVIII.
the Church
niel Herle
20s. per H

XXIX.
choly, esp
or 12s. per

XXX.
briefly con
sary to Sal

XXXI.
logue betw
Servant M
Instruction
bly offered
others, wh
2d. or 12s

against some of the *Doctrines of Christianity*, that they are above our Reason. The *seventh* Edition. Price 2s. bound.

XXIV. An Essay on *Foolish Questions*: Another on *Contending for the Faith*. Being the Substance of two Visitation Sermons. Matt xiii. 25. *While Men slept, the Enemy came and sowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his Way*. Price 6d. or 5s. per Dozen.

XXV. St. *Paul's* Description of his own Religion opened and explained, The *second* Edition, Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

XXVI. Religion tried by the Test of sober and impartial Reason. The *second* Edition corrected. Price 6d. or 5s. per Dozen.

XXVII. The True Church man set in a just and clear Light; or an Essay towards the Right Character of a Faithful Son of the Established Church. The *second* Edition. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

XXVIII. A sincere Christian and Convert from the Church of *Rome*, exemplified in the Case of *Daniel Herley*, a poor *Irish* Peasant. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred.

XXIX. Sober Thoughts for the Cure of Melancholy, especially that which is religious. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXX. An Abstract of the Church Catechism briefly containing the Substance of all that is necessary to Salvation. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXXI. A Discourse of Confirmation; in a Dialogue between the Minister of a Parish and a young Servant Maid named *Sarah*. Containing proper Instructions for such as are to be confirmed. Humbly offered to the Consideration of all Parents, and others, who have the Care of educating Youth. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXXII.

XXXII. Advice to a young Divine concerning Preaching. Price 1d. or 6s. per Hundred.

XXXIII. Two Tracts; the one, Directions to a sober Christian for the acceptable Offering up the *Lord's Prayer* to God in his Private Devotions; the other, Sober Thoughts on the Doctrine of Predestination. Price 1d. or 6s. per Hundred.

XXXIV. The Root and Spring of true Virtue and Piety; a Sermon preached at *Tuam*, much enlarged. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

N. B. The before-mentioned Thirty-four Tracts, all written by the most Reverend Dr. *Edward Synge*, late Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in Ireland, may be had bound together, in four neat Pocket Volumes. Price 12s.

The Church Catechism, with single Proofs taken from the Words of Scripture only, after a new Method. By the Reverend Mr. *Bunbury*. The seventh Edition. To which are added, Graces, and a Morning and Evening Prayer. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

A Brief Exposition of the Catechism of the Church of *England*, in an easy and familiar Method, for the Use of Persons of tender Years and moderate Attainments. By *N. Clark*, Rector of *Shafton*, St. *James* in the County of *Dorset*. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred.

The Spirit of St. *Paul*; or the Sentiments of this Great Apostle relating to a Christian Life and Conversation. Adapted to all the Days of the Month. Together with an Appendix of select Collects and Prayers. With Forms of Morning, Noon, and Evening Service; taken from the Liturgy of the Church of *England*, and the best *English* Writers in the Devotional Way. By *Tho. Morrit*, A. M. Price Bound 1s.

E S
K N
R E
To
A short and
and

By the mo
late Lord
Author of An
for no

The
Follow Right
that call
foolish and
they do gen

Printed for

[P

AN
ESSAY
Towards making the
KNOWLEDGE
OF
RELIGION

EASY

To the meanest Capacity.

BEING

A short and plain Account of the *Doctrines*
and *Rules* of CHRISTIANITY.

By the most Rev. Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,
late Lord Archbishop of Tuam, in Ireland; ;
Author of An Answer to all the Excuses and Pretences
for not coming to the Holy Communion.

The TWELFTH EDITION, Corrected.

Follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them
that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart. But
foolish and unlearned Questions avoid, knowing that
they do gender Strifes. 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23.

LONDON,

Printed for THOMAS TRYE, near Grays-Inn-Gate
in Holborn. MDCCLII.

[Price 2 d. or 12 s. per Hundred.]

BOOKS Printed for and Sold by T. Try

I. **T**HE whole Works of the most Rev. Dr. Edward Synge, late Lord Archbishop of Tuam; Consisting of a great Variety of Tracts, on the most useful, interesting and important Points and Doctrines of the Christian Religion now first collected together in Four Volumes. Price neatly bound 12 Shillings.

II. An Answer to all the *Excuses* and *Pretences* which Men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion: To which is added, A brief Account of the End and Design of the Holy Communion, the Obligation to receive it, the Way to prepare for it, and the Behaviour of ourselves both at and after it. The Eighteenth Edition. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred. By Dr. Synge, Author of the *Essay towards making the Knowledge of Religion Easy*.

N. B. This Book (necessary to be read on the Approach of every Sacrament Day throughout the Year, by all Sorts and Degrees of People) is also printed in a neat Pocket Size,

In this Large Letter,

for the Curious, Aged, and such as cannot use a smaller Print. Price neatly bound in black Calf 1s. bound plain 8 d. and sewed in blue Paper, cut on the Edges, 6 d.

III. A Gentleman's Religion, in three Parts: The first contains the Principles of Natural Religion; the second and third the Doctrines of Christianity both as to Faith and Practice. With an Appendix, wherein it is proved that nothing contrary to our Reason can possibly be the Object of our Belief; but that it is no just Exception against some of the Doctrines of Christianity, that they are above our Reason. By his Grace Edward late Lord Archbishop of Tuam. The sixth Edition enlarged. Price 2s. bound.



R E



with once c
a great ma
lage in it
three, prop
other discr
he may exp
until thou
and ready
are therein
far ground
thyselt to
Scriptures,
ther impro
up to the
these Thing
xiii. 17.



T O T H E
R E A D E R.

IF thou wantest Instruction in Religion, and art not furnished with better than what this little Book may afford thee, do not content thyself with once or twice reading of it, but read it over a great many Times; and if there be any Passage in it which seems doubtful or difficult to thee, propose it to the Minister, or to any other discreet and well instructed Christian, that he may explain it to thee; and never leave off until thou art arrived to a clear Knowledge, and ready Remembrance, of all the Things that are therein contained. And when thou art thus far grounded in the Knowledge of Religion, set thyself to the diligent reading of the Holy Scriptures, and such other Books as may farther improve thee in it, and effectually stir thee up to the diligent Practice of it. *If ye know these Things, happy are ye-if ye do them, John xiii. 17.*

T H E
P R E F A C E



OO many there are of those that profess Christianity, who understand but very little of the true Design and Purport of it ; and while they are so little acquainted with that which ought to be the Rule of their Faith and Actions, it is not to be wondered, that their Opinions are absurd and foolish, and their Lives wicked.

Many good Sermons are preached, and Books published, for the Instruction of the People : But as a Lecture (however learned and rational) in any Art or Science, is not to be understood by any Man who is not first made acquainted with the general System of it ; so Sermons and other excellent Discourses are but lost to abundance of Men, for want of their being before-hand carefully grounded in the Knowledge of those Things which generally all Christians do agree in.

I grant indeed, that such Things as these, Men ought to have learned by attending on the Work of Catechising in their Yeanger Days : But where they have neglected this so necessary a thing in their Youth, we ought, in Charity to their Souls,

to use the be
them to it

It has be
ed Men, th
to bring al
able underst
gion, woul
Discourses
days in one
the whole
these Disco
Christian C
one Year t
tent with
strangely fo
of Expressi
than this

And thi
that if any
stian Relig
guage, and
Hour's rea
put into th
to buy, or
and being
in Families
ven in Par
late as thei
ordinary go
for ever ke
ries, such
Christian

P R E F A C E.

v

to use the best and easiest Method we can, to bring them to it in their Riper Years.

It has been the Judgment of some wise and learned Men, that the most effectual way, under God, to bring all Christian People to a true and profitable understanding of, and Steadiness in their Religion, would be, to have a Set of plain and short Discourses composed, equal in Number to the Sundays in one Year, and plainly and fully containing the whole Body of Christianity; and to have one of these Discourses read every Lord's Day in each Christian Congregation; and so to continue from one Year to another: And if Men could be content with wholesome Instruction, and were not so strangely fond of Novelty, of Fancy, and Variety of Expression, I think indeed that a better Way than this could not be contrived.

And this very thing brought it into my Mind, that if any reasonable Draught of the whole Christian Religion could be made in very plain Language, and brought within the Compass of one Hour's reading: Such a little sort of a Book being put into the Hands of those who have not Money to buy, or Leisure to read those that are larger; and being often read in private by single Persons, in Families, and in English Schools, and being given in Parcels to Boys at the Latin School to translate as their Sunday's Exercise, might be of extraordinary good Use, in order to the imprinting, and for ever keeping fresh in their Minds and Memories, such orthodox and necessary Notions of the Christian Doctrine, as may always have a most

profitable Influence both upon their Faith and Practice. In pursuance of which Design, I have composed this small Work; and should be very much pleased if some judicious Person, who is a sufficient Master both of Clearness of Thought and Plainness as well as Conciseness of Expression, would take the same thing in hand; whom I easily grant, might perform it much better than I have done.

The Reader is to expect no more here, but a general Account of the necessary Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity: My Proposal being only to give Men of a mean Capacity a true Notion of these things, by way of a Foundation for farther Knowledge. And for the more particular handling of such Matters and Quotations of Scriptures upon which they rely, I refer them to those many Sermons and other excellent Discourses which they have such frequent Opportunities both of hearing and reading. I shall only add, that it may be of good Use for a Man, as often as he intends to receive the Holy Communion, to read over this or some such other little Book, which may briefly put him in mind of all the Particulars of his Duty; and so be a help to him both in the recollecting of his Sins, and renewing of his holy Resolutions.



E

Know

To

Being a
DOC
CHRIthe Rules
which is ca



A N

E S S A Y

Towards making the

Knowledge of Religion

E A S Y

To the meanest Capacity,

Being a short and plain Account of the
DOCTRINES and RULES of
CHRISTIANITY.



L L that God requires from any Man, in order to everlasting Happiness, is, *First*, to believe those things which he has made known; which is called *Faith*: *Secondly*, to live according to the Rules or Laws which he has given to us; which is called *Obedience*: And, *Thirdly*, when
a Man

a Man finds that he has any way broken the Law of God, to be sorrowful for it, to confess it to God, to beg his Pardon for it, and diligently to amend it for the Time to come, which is called *Repentance*. These three Things then, namely, *Faith*, *Obedience*, and *Repentance*, do contain the whole Substance of the Duty of every Christian.

I begin with the first of these three: And in order to enlighten the Mind, and strengthen the Faith of a Christian, I shall endeavour, *First*, to shew what are the chiefest of those Things which God has made known to Mankind, in order to our Belief: And *Secondly*, what Grounds and Assurance we have, upon which to believe them.

As to the former of these, the Things made known by God to be believed by us, are chiefly these:

First, That there is a God, who made the Heavens, the Earth, and all Things therein contain'd; and has disposed all Things in that most useful and beautiful Order in which they still continue. That God is not a Body, like unto us, nor subject unto any such Frailties, or Imperfections as we are: But that he is a Spirit, Eternal, without beginning, or ending, most holy, just and true, most gracious and merciful: That he knows all Things, can do all Things, and is present every where, without being confin'd to any Place. And although there neither is nor can be more than one God, yet in the

the Unity
there are
quent Me
tures; and
and Attrib
first of the
second the
the third t
in short, i
Doctrine o
Trinity: w
because G
ought not
it is above
As long a
such thing
ly; but w
fect State
shall see f
are known
To the
Father, th
diately asc
by his Alr
ordering i
Providenc
As to t
call'd the
believe th
took the M
Man for c
Sin only e

made Easy to the meanest Capacity. 3

the Unity of the Godhead or Divine Nature, there are three distinct Persons, of whom frequent Mention is made in the Holy Scriptures; and to each of whom both the Name and Attributes of God are often ascrib'd: The first of these Persons is call'd the *Father*; the second the *Son*, and sometimes the *Word*, and the third the *Holy Ghost* or *Spirit*. And this, in short, is the Meaning of what we call the Doctrine of the Holy, Blessed, and Undivided Trinity: which is to be received and believed, because God has made it known to us; but ought not to be curiously pryed into, because it is above our Understanding to comprehend. As long as we are here in the Body, we see such things as these but as *through a Glass darkly*; but when we shall be advanced to the perfect State of the Blessed in Heaven, than we shall see *face to face*, and *know even as also we are known*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

To the first of these Persons, namely to the *Father*, the Holy Scriptures do more immediately ascribe the Work of creating the World by his Almighty Power, and of governing and ordering it, and all things in it, by his good Providence.

As to the second of these Persons, who is call'd the *Son*, or the *Word*, we are taught to believe that he came down from Heaven, and took the Nature of Man upon him; and became Man for our Sake; like unto us in all things, Sin only excepted: That he was conceived by
the

the Power of the Holy Spirit of God, in the Womb of a pure Virgin, and born of her whereby he became both God and Man in one Person, was called by the Name of *Jesus* and *Christ*: And after he had lived a most pure and unspotted Life, was falsely accused by the People of the *Jews* before *Pontius Pilate* the *Roman* Governor, and was put to the shameful and painful Death of the Cross: And that it might fully appear that he had suffered even unto Death, a Spear was thrust into his Side while he was upon the Cross; and after his Body was taken down, it was laid in a Sepulchre, and continued there without Life until the third Day.

Now that we may understand how we are concerned in this Matter, we must here take Notice, that the first Man and Woman, *Adam* and *Eve*, whom God created at the beginning of the World, and from whom all Mankind are descended: This first Man and Woman, I say, soon after they were created, did commit a very great Sin, and highly offended Almighty God, in eating of the Fruit of that Tree, which God had positively and strictly forbidden them to eat, under the Threatening of a very great Punishment. By this Sin of theirs, their Nature became weakened and corrupted, and very much inclined to Sin and Wickedness. And because the Nature of the Children must needs be like to that of their Parents, the Corruption of the Nature of these two Persons, who were
the

made

the common
communicate.
to all their
has ever
those Thin
leave und
manded: v
what we c
ginal Sin.

And be
Man (exce
an Age, a
managing
mitted ma
upon both
ture render
Eternal H
us; and al
of God, an
his Justice
This is
which all
the Sin of
ing that M
this evil S
would not
off: But w
a Capacity
and to tha
come, of
had depriv
condescend

the common Parents of all Mankind, did communicate an universal Corruption of Nature to all their Posterity; by which all Mankind has ever since been naturally inclined to do those Things which God has forbid, and to leave undone those things which he has commanded: which Corruption of our Nature is what we commonly call by the Name of *Original Sin*.

And besides this Original Sin, there is no Man (except *Jesus Christ*) who has lived to such an Age, as to be capable of governing and managing his own Actions, but what has committed many actual Sins and Transgressions; upon both which Accounts we are all by Nature render'd unfit for, and incapable of, that Eternal Happiness which God had provided for us; and also are become exposed to the Wrath of God, and to that Eternal Punishment which his Justice has prepared for Sinners.

This is the sad and wretched Condition which all Mankind by Nature are in, ever since the Sin of our first Parents. But notwithstanding that Man had thus brought himself into this evil State, yet God in his infinite Mercy would not presently forsake, or wholly cast him off: But was pleas'd again to admit us all into a Capacity of being restored to his Favour, and to that eternal Happiness in the Life to come, of which our original and actual Sins had deprived us. And in order to this, he condescended to send his Son into the World to
take

take our Nature upon him, and to become our Redeemer: his Sufferings and Death being accepted of by God, as a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World: For the sake of which, and of his most holy and unspotted Life, God has been pleased to promise Pardon and Acceptance to all those, who either before or since *Christ's* coming into the World, have or shall embrace the true Faith, heartily repent of their former Sins, and carefully lead their Lives according to the Laws and Commandments of God. And this which *Jesus Christ* has thus done and obtained for us, is commonly called by the Name of the *Work of our Redemption*.

Furthermore, we are taught to believe that *Jesus Christ* after his Death did descend into Hell. But since God has not thought it necessary in his Word to give us a clear and distinct Account, either what Place is meant by *Hell*, or for what Reason *Christ* did descend thither, there is no Reason why we should trouble ourselves with any curious Enquiry into this Matter.

And after it had sufficiently appeared, that *Jesus Christ* was truly dead; upon the third Day after his Death he rose again to Life, appeared to his Apostles and very many of his Disciples, was seen and handled by them, and eat, drank, and conversed with them for the Space of no less than Forty Days (that in that Time they might have sufficient Assurance of the Reality of his

made

his Resurre
Multitud
ascended
the highe
Right Ha
to make I
Concer
Trinity,
Spirit, be
taught to
cension in
sent by t
forth fro
descend
Christ; en
their Und
stand the
of God;
teach and
Power; a
of Langu
several N
giving t
better co
taught a
nisters a
appear in
same min
stles wer
for the I
mation o
we assure

made Easy to the meanest Capacity. 7

his Resurrection) after which, in the Sight of a Multitude of them, he was openly taken up and ascended into Heaven, where he remains in the highest Glory, which is called *sitting at the Right Hand of God*; where he continues for ever to make Intercession with God for us.

Concerning the third Person in the Holy Trînity, who is called the *Holy Ghost* or *Holy Spirit*, because he works *Holiness* in us, we are taught to believe that soon after *Christ's* Ascension into Heaven, the Holy Ghost being sent by the Father and the Son, and coming forth from them, did in a wonderful Manner descend upon the Apostles and Disciples of *Christ*; enlightening their Minds, and opening their Understandings, that they might understand the Holy Scriptures, and know the Will of God; giving them Gifts and Abilities to teach and preach the Gospel with Truth and Power; and enabling them to speak all Sorts of Languages, that they might instruct all the several Nations and People of the World; and giving them Power to work Miracles for the better confirming those Things which they taught and preached. And although the Ministers and Preachers of the Gospel do not appear in these Days to be endowed with the same miraculous Gifts and Abilities as the Apostles were (there being other sufficient Means for the Instruction of the People, and Confirmation of the true Faith and Religion) yet are we assured, that where any Man in an honest

B

and

and lawful way, endeavours with Sincerity and Diligence to improve his Understanding, and increase his Knowledge in the Things that relate to God and Religion, for the Good both of himself and others; the Holy Spirit of God will not be wanting to such a Man, but will assist his pious and honest Endeavours, and will more and more enlighten his Mind, that he may grow and encrease in the Knowledge of those things which are necessary both to his own and others Salvation. And thus the Holy Ghost is the immediate Author and Worker of those Gifts and Graces within us which are necessary for the *Edification*; that is to say, the Instruction of all Christian People.

And whereas by Nature we are all of us inclined to Evil, and unable of ourselves to think or do any thing as we should; the Holy Spirit of God, besides the enlightening of our Minds with the Knowledge of those Things which are necessary to Salvation, does also move and work upon our Conscience, our Will, and Affections, in order to incline and bring us to, and assist us in the diligent and constant Practice of those Things which God requires from us. And thus the Holy Ghost is also the Author of Holiness in us; (I mean, if we comply with his Motions, and do not resist them) which is called the Work of *Sanctification*.

The whole Congregation of People, who by the outward preaching of the Gospel and the inward Motions of the Holy Spirit, have been called

made

called and
true Faith
Father, Son
I say, toge
by the Na
a King is
the King a
ry End an
ing his C
Godliness
for this R
although
outwardly
and live
Church; a
may yet
outward S
the Gover
Further
wealth by
Society, a
make Part
our Saviou
but one Ch
ship of whi
stians, are
to partake
Privileges
society; alth
the Mistake
ought to be
ity, is div

made Easy to the meanest Capacity. 9

called and brought to receive and embrace the true Faith and baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; all these Persons, I say, together with their Children, are called by the Name of the *Church of Christ*. And as a King is the Head of his Kingdom, so is *Christ* the King and Head of his Church: And the very End and Design of *Christ's* calling and gathering his Church, being the promoting of true Godliness here, in order to Salvation hereafter; for this Reason the Church is said to be *holy*, although many Persons who are ungodly, may outwardly appear and profess to be Christians, and live in the visible Communion of the Church; as one that is a Rebel in his Heart, may yet pretend to be a Subject, and live in outward Society with those who are faithful to the Government.

Furthermore, As a Kingdom or Commonwealth by its Laws and Constitutions is but one Society, although evil Men may raise Factions, make Parties, and cause Divisions within it; so our Saviour *Christ Jesus* appointed and called but one Church; in the *Communion* or Fellowship of which, all *Saints*, that is all good Christians, are for ever to be joined and united, and to partake in common the Advantages and Privileges which God has promised to that Society; altho' by the Perverseness of some, and the Mistakes of others, this same Church, which ought to be entirely one both in Faith and Charity, is divided into contrary Parties, which re-

use and renounce Communion with one another.

And whereas, before the coming of *Christ*, the Church of God, that is to say, the People whom God had outwardly called, and made Himself and his Will known unto them by his revealed Word; whereas this Church, I say, was then confined to one particular Place and Nation, that is to say, to the Temple of *Jerusalem*, and the Children of *Israel*; *Jesus Christ* has called all Nations and People indifferently into his Church, offering the Advantages and Privileges thereof, in as ample a Manner to the *Gentiles* as to the *Jews*; and accepting of true Faith, Repentance, Obedience, and Worship, alike in all Parts and Places of the whole World. Upon which Account the Church is called *Catholic*, that is to say, Universal.

As there is a Covenant, that is to say, a mutual Agreement or Promise made between a Husband and his Wife, a Master and his Servant, a King and his People: So in like Manner, is there a Covenant made between God, and through *Jesus Christ* on the one part, and the Church on the other. Every Member of the Church for his Part, promises and engages to perform those Things which God requires in order to Salvation, which, at the Beginning, I told you, were Faith, Obedience, and Repentance: And God, for his Part, has promised for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*, that he will give the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit

made

all those
he will p
pent; th
return to
ken, as o
yet a Da
have an E
all Mank
Men shall
Souls; an
edly, and
ed to eter
his evil S
for their
faithfully
which Go
everlasting
the Presen

And th
of those th
to Mankin
thing to b
Assurance
ought to b
And he
Things are
red of ther
standing.
son inform
framed by
much. Orc
whole and

made Easy to the meanest Capacity. II

all those who make a good Use thereof; that he will pardon the Sins of those who truly repent; that altho' when we die, our Bodies do return to the Earth, out of which they were taken, as our Souls do to God that gave them, yet a Day shall come when this World shall have an End, and *Jesus Christ* shall come to judge all Mankind; at which time, the Bodies of all Men shall be raised again, and re-united to their Souls; and whereas they who have lived wickedly, and died impenitently, shall be condemned to eternal Torments, with the Devil and his evil Spirits, who were cast out of Heaven for their Rebellion against God; they who faithfully and sincerely perform those Things which God requires, shall be rewarded with everlasting Happiness and Joy in Heaven, in the Presence of God for evermore.

And thus we have heard what are the chief of those things which God has made known to Mankind in order to our Belief: The next thing to be considered, is, what Grounds and Assurance we have upon which we may and ought to believe them.

And here in the first Place, some of these Things are to be Believed, because we are assured of them by our own Reason and Understanding. Thus for Example, our own Reason informs us, that the World was made and framed by Almighty God, because we see so much Order, Beauty, and Usefulness in the whole and every Part of it; that God is Eter-

nal, most Wise, Good, Just, Powerful, and Perfect, because he is the first Cause of all things: that good Men shall be rewarded, and wicked Men punished, because God is Good and Just, Wise and Powerful; and that these Rewards and Punishments shall be distributed in the Life which is to come, because we very often see wicked Men prosperous, and good Men much afflicted, as long as they remain in this Life. These, I say, and some such things as these, are abundantly taught us even by our Reason alone, and therefore ought to be received and believed, even tho' God had not made them farther known unto us by any Revelation.

But, we have a farther ground to believe not only these and such like things as were last mentioned, but also all the rest of those things of which I have been giving an Account; and that is, because they are plainly contained in that Book which we commonly call the Holy Scripture; To which Book we ought to give credit, because the Doctrine which is contained in that Part of it which is called the *New Testament*, was confirmed not only by the Miracles and wonderful Works, but also by the Death and Sufferings of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles, and many of his Disciples, : And for the other Part of it, which is called the *Old Testament*, we ought to give the like Credit to that also, because *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles do so often in the *New Testament* give Testimony of the Truth of it, and assure us, that it, as well as the

made

New, wa
spired by

And a

Book wer

as are no

common l

dence, ha

many Ho

much Can

preserving

plaining o

may be vo

unlearned

the hearin

guages as

ful to rec

godly Me

give ther

merciful,

because th

within th

with any

But if a

some of th

proposes

Knowledge

it seems i

them, be

them: I a

suade me

ly contrar

pretend t

New, was written by Holy Men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

And although the several Parts of this Holy Book were originally written in such Languages as are not now generally understood by the common People; yet since God, in his Providence, has all along stirred up the Spirits of so many Holy and Learned Men, to bestow so much Care and Pains both in the keeping and preserving, and also in the translating and explaining of this Book, and every Part of it; we may be very well assured, that if those who are unlearned, do give themselves diligently to the hearing and reading of it, in such Languages as they do understand, and also are careful to receive and follow such Instructions as godly Men, both by preaching and writing, do give them out of it; God, who is good and merciful, will undoubtedly accept of them, because that in this Case, they do all that is within their Power to do, and more cannot with any Reason be required from them.

But if any Man should here tell me, that some of those things which the Holy Scripture proposes to be believed, are far above our Knowledge and Capacity, and therefore that it seems impossible for us to give our Assent to them, because we are not able to understand them: I answer, That if any Man would persuade me to believe a thing which were plainly contrary to Sense and Reason, and should pretend that it were revealed by God, I should immedi-

immediately, in such a Case, refuse to comply or yield my Assent, because I am sure that a good and gracious God, will never require such monstrous and absurd Things from his Creatures: He never will impose it upon us to believe that Bitter is Sweet, or Sweet Bitter; that Darknes is Light, or Light Darknes; that what we see, and feel, and taste, to be a small Portion of Bread, is a Human Body; or, that one and the same Body can be entirely in many several and far distant Places at once. Such Things as these, I say, I am sure God will never impose upon us to believe; because he has so framed the Mind of Man, as to reject all such Absurdities and Contradictions as these, as soon as ever he hears them named. But as for things which do not appear to be absurd, but only are dark and obscure, and not contrary to our Understanding altho' it may be very far above it, if God has thought fit to declare some such things as these unto us, there can be no Reason why we should not give Credit to them upon his Authority. A Man who is born blind, believes that there is such a Thing as Light (altho' he knows not what it is) because all his Neighbours tell him so, and if the Holy Scripture tells me that there are three Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature; and that the Divine and Human Nature are joined together in the single Person of *Christ*, why ought I not to give my Assent to these things, altho' I do not understand the Manner of them?

made

And the first thing
ly, to believe
is called *Fa*
cond thing
is, to live
which he
dience.

The W
the Laws
Reason, and
Most of t
in themsel
they who
may yet v
Guidance
presently
of the Pa
ing and a
teaching
therwise c
know; h
his Laws
sufficient
because h
our Supre
requires it
The ch
of God (c
comprehe
ly known
ments: B

And

made Easy to the meanest Capacity. 15

And thus I have given some Account of the first thing which God requires from us; namely, to believe what he has made known, which is called *Faith*. I proceed therefore to the second thing which he requires from us: Which is, to live according to those Rules or Laws which he has given us; which is called *Obedience*.

The Way whereby we come to know what the Laws of God are, is partly by our own Reason, and more fully by the Holy Scripture: Most of the Things which God commands are in themselves so very reasonable and plain, that they who have not the Light of his Word, may yet very easily know them, even by the Guidance of their own Understanding; as will presently appear, when we come to take a View of the Particulars: And for the further directing and assisting our Reason, as also for the teaching us some Part of his Will, which otherwise of ourselves we could never come to know; he has given us a full Account of all his Laws in his revealed Word: And this is sufficient Reason to oblige us to keep them, because he who is our Creator and Redeemer, our Supreme Lord, our Master, and our Judge, requires it from us.

The chief and most fundamental of the Laws of God (and under which all the rest may be comprehended) are those which are commonly known by the Name of the Ten Commandments: But for the more easy taking a full View
both

both of these and all the rest of God's Laws together, they are generally divided into three Sorts; the first whereof contains all those Laws which teach us our Duty to God; the second contains those Laws which teach every Man his Duty towards himself; and the third contains those Laws which teach us our Duty towards other Men: Under which Division I shall endeavour to give as short, yet plain and comprehensive an Account as I can of them.

First then, as for the Duty which we owe unto God, the chief Parts or Branches of it are these, namely, to acknowledge and believe all those things which he has made known (of which I have already spoken:) To own that whatever he commands or threatens is very just and fit: To hope for, and expect the Performance of all his Promises to us upon those very Terms and Conditions that he has set down; neither presuming upon God's Mercy, as if he would bless us although we continue in our Sins; nor despairing of his Goodness and Favour towards us, if we repent of them and serve him faithfully: To love God above all Things because he is so excellent and perfect in himself, and so good and gracious to us; and to manifest this our Love towards him by our earnest Endeavours to do all Things which may please him, and by striving to enjoy and be with him, as much as we can, here in this Life by Prayer and Meditation, and also in the Life to come by preparing ourselves

elves to be
ven: To
he is most
ly punish u
of them; fo
afraid to o
Men in the
in all Man
ourselves,
faithfully,
Strength, v
Temptation
that he wil
and Afflict
for us, or
evidence to be
ble in the
umble our
eration of
own Weak
ourselves to
Things che
ands, and
earing wh
evidence, shal
more we a
to be fruitf
virtue and
acknowledg
els, and to
our outw
his Work

elves to be for ever happy with him in Heaven: To fear God above all things, because he is most Just and Powerful, and will certainly punish us for our Sins, if we do not repent of them; for which Reason, we should be more afraid to offend him, than to disoblige all the Men in the World: To put our Trust in God in all Manner of Danger or Distress, assuring ourselves, that if we continue to serve him faithfully, he will give us Grace and Spiritual Strength, whereby we shall be enabled to resist Temptations, and perform our Duty; and also that he will either deliver us from the Troubles and Afflictions of this World, if he sees it best for us, or else will give us Strength and Patience to bear them, and make them serviceable in the End to our eternal Happiness; To humble ourselves before God, in a due Consideration of his Greatness and Goodness, and our own Weakness and Unworthiness; submitting ourselves to his Holy Will and Pleasure; in all Things chearfully obeying whatever he commands, and not only patiently, but thankfully bearing whatever he, in the Course of his Providence, shall think fit to lay upon us; and, the more we are afflicted, endeavouring the more to be fruitful and abound in all the Works of Virtue and Piety: To honour God inwardly by acknowledging his infinite Greatness and Goodness, and to express this Honour towards him in our outward Actions; coming to the Place of his Worship with Seriousness, and behaving

our-

ourselves there with Gravity and Decency, paying a due Respect to his Ministers for the Sake of their Function, being ready to contribute what in us lies, to the Advancement of his Glory; employing his own Day in Works and Exercises of Piety and Charity; Reading, and Hearing, or Meditating upon his Holy Word, and endeavouring to get the best Instruction we can out of it; giving due Attendance upon, and Obedience unto, those Ordinances which he has appointed, such as Preaching, Catechizing, Baptism, and the Holy Communion; often calling to Mind the Vow which we enter into at the Time of our Baptism, whereby we are admitted into the visible Society and Fellowship of *Christ's Church*; and preparing ourselves constantly and diligently by Prayer, Meditation, Self-Examination, and Repentance, that we may be fit to come and eat of that Bread, and Drink of that Cup which *Christ* has appointed as a Remembrance of his Death and Sufferings for us; and also as the Means whereby we partake of, and communicate in the Merits of his Passion; for which Reason it is called the *Holy Communion*; never mentioning God's Holy Name but with Seriousness and Reverence; abstaining from all vain, profane, and false Swearing, Cursing, and Blaspheming; always making a Conscience of performing faithfully whatever we have bound ourselves to by an Oath, and never making Jest or a By-word of any thing that relates

God, or
last of all
privately
Goodness
him for
poral wh
to him for
and for o
and to be
fering up
and throu
most bless
day, are t
Parts of o
ever caref
Things to
account, a
Duty, to a
done. W
hope, nor
nor praise,
Image, or
Heaven on
Manner as
Almighty
will not e
that Love,
unto him.
I come
Laws of G
Man toward
which are
Go

God, or wherein Religion is concerned: And last of all, to worship God both publickly and privately; that is to say, to praise him for his Goodness and Excellency; to give Thanks unto him for his Blessings both Spiritual and Temporal which we have received from him, to pray to him for all Things necessary both for our Souls and for our Bodies; to confess our Sins unto him, and to beg the Pardon of them from him; offering up all these our Devotions in the Name and through the Mediation of *Jesus Christ* our most blessed Saviour and Redeemer. These, I say, are the main Branches, and fundamental Parts of our Duty to God: And as we must be ever careful and diligent to perform all these Things towards him, so must we not, upon any account, render this, or any Part of this same Duty, to any Thing or Person but to God alone. We must neither love, nor fear, nor hope, nor trust in, nor honour, nor worship, nor praise, nor pray to any Saint or Angel, or Image, or any Thing whatsoever, whether in Heaven or upon Earth, in the same or the like Manner as we perform these Things towards Almighty God: For God is a jealous God, and will not endure any Rival or Competitor in that Love, Honour, and Duty which we owe unto him.

I come now, in the *second* Place, to those Laws of God which concern the Duty of every Man towards himself: The chief Branches of which are these that follow; that is to say, to

be humble in our own Thoughts, considering what frail and infirm, what ignorant and forgetful Creatures we are; not to desire any Praise from Men, but to refer the Glory of every thing that may seem good in us, wholly and intirely to God, who is the Author of it; to be meek and calm in our Temper and Behaviour, never suffering Anger, or any other Passion, to grow so strong within us, as to make us either say or do any thing that is unbecoming a *Christian*; often to consider and think upon our State and Condition, with respect both to this World and that which is to come, that so we may be always upon our guard against Temptations to Sin; to be patient and contented in all Estates and Conditions of Life, as well in Sicknes as in Health, in Adversity as in Prosperity; neither murmuring nor repining at any Evil that befalls us, nor envying those who seem to be in a better Condition than we: not coveting, or in the least desiring either Riches or Preferment, but as God sees fit, and may conduce most to his Glory; but always submitting to the secret Hand and Directions of God's Providence, which is in every Thing that comes to pass in the World; to be diligent and industrious in improving ourselves more and more in the Knowledge of Religion, and Practice of every Sort of Virtue, making the best Use we can of that Portion of Grace which we already have, that so more may be given to us: to be very chaste and modest both in our Actions, and also in our very

Word

Words
filthy L
ner of
and sub
rate in I
ing, no
Idleness,
such as a
in Appa
which se
tify our
Use of th
and thos
may tend
and the
and Bodi
count of
Law is o
And n
which we
of God,
soever (w
or High,
tho' not
cerely, w
we love
never fail
for the W
Endeavou
his Good
portunity
ing Care,

made Easy to the meanest Capacity. 21

Words and Thoughts, avoiding not only all filthy Lust and Uncleanneſs, but even all Manner of immodest Diſcourſe; and mortifying and ſubduing all impure Deſires; to be moderate in Eating, ſober and temperate in Drinking, not waſting over much Time in Sleep or Idleneſs, or any Sort of Recreation, much leſs in ſuch as are unlawful; nor beſtowing much Coſt in Apparel or Furniture, or any other Thing which ſerves only to pleaſe our Fancy, or gratify our Curioſity; but always making ſuch an Uſe of thoſe Creatures which God has given us, and thoſe Liberties which he has allowed us, as may tend moſt to his Glory, the Good of others, and the Health and Welfare both of our Souls and Bodies. And this ſhall ſuffice for a brief Account of that Duty which every Man by God's Law is obliged to perform towards himſelf.

And now, in the *Third* Place, for that Duty which we owe to all other Men. By the Laws of God, we are obliged to love all Men whatſoever (whether they are Poor or Rich, Low or High, Friends, Strangers, or Enemies) altho' not altogether as well, yet as truly and ſincerely, without any Fraud or Diſſimulation, as we love ourſelves; and this our Love muſt never fail to be ſhewn, by our hearty Prayers for the Welfare of every Man, and our ſincere Endeavours to prevent his Hurt, and promote his Good, as far as we have Ability and Opportunity for it; always remembering and taking Care, that in our doing Good unto one

C 2

Man,

Man, we do not offer any Injury, or neglect any Part of that Duty which we owe unto another; but doing unto every other Man, as we should judge it to be reasonable and conscionable for us to expect and desire that they should do by us, if we were in their Case and Condition. We must neither take away nor detain from any other Man, any thing which is his lawful Right; but whatsoever is fairly due to him, either by the Laws of God, or those of the Land, or by any lawful Promise or Agreement made to or with him, must freely and readily be rendered to him, without putting him to the Trouble of suing or contending for it: The Life of no Man must be taken away (except by the lawful Authority of the Magistrate, or in one's own just and necessary Defence) nor must his Body be maimed or hurt, or his good Name injured or lessened, either by raising or helping to spread any false or ill grounded Reports concerning him, or by publishing his Faults or Failings, except in Justice and Charity to others we become bound to do it: But, on the contrary, we must be ready, as we have Opportunity, to contribute what in us lies, to preserve the Life, and Health, and good Name, as well as the Goods and Estate of our Neighbour, if they appear to be in Danger, either by any Accident, or by the malicious Design of another against them: We must not tempt or allure, or by our evil Example encourage, other Men to commit Sin; but as we may conveniently,

made

ly, we m
hort the
deceive
Speech
have m
and sinc
ing wit
in any I
our Pov
altho' M
for the
and for
Estates,
nothing
out of p
greater
requires
which f
ways de
as to M
with, a
the mild
any He
made ut
Schisma
persecut
barely f
provide
good, a
any thi
the Stat
of the I

ly,

ly, we must admonish, advise, reprove, and exhort them for their Souls good: Nor may we deceive any Man by false or equivocating Speeches, or by breaking such Promises as we have made to him; but must be true, faithful, and sincere in all our Conversation and Dealing with all Men: Those who are Poor, or in any Distress or Affliction, we are bound, to our Power, to relieve, help, and comfort; and altho' Malefactors may and must be punished for the publick Good, for a Terror to others, and for the saving and protecting the Lives, Estates, and good Names of honest Men; yet nothing of this Nature must be done either out of private Hatred or Resentment, or with greater Cruelty or Severity than what the Law requires, and is necessary for the true End for which such Punishments are or ought to be always designed. They who are under Errors as to Matters of Religion, are to be argued with, and perswaded for their Souls good, in the mildest and most gentle Manner; nor should any Heat or Anger, Railing, or Reviling, be made use of against the greatest Hereticks or Schismaticks; neither ought any Man to be persecuted or punished by the Civil Power, barely for his Mistakes in Matters of Doctrine, provided that he be peaceable, and his Practice good, and that he neither attempts nor teaches any thing which tends to the disturbing of the State, or to the debauching of the Morals of the People. They who without any Just Cause

C 3

Cause are publick Enemies to the State (whether they are foreign Foes or domestick Rebels) may be resisted, and under the Commission of lawful Authority, subdued by Force of Arms: And if a private-Enemy unlawfully assaults, or any way endeavours to injure any Man in his Person, Goods, or good Name, it is lawful for the Person who is thus assaulted or injured, to stand up in his own Defence, as far as the Justice and Exigence of his Case requires. But when we have thus done all that is necessary, or that we are able honestly to do, for the Preservation of ourselves or the Publick; we must not proceed farther out of Hatred or Malice to do any thing merely to vex or grieve, or hurt even the greatest and most implacable Enemies: but on the contrary, having so secured ourselves, as that they can do us no Hurt, we must always be ready to do them all Manner of Good that is consistent with our own necessary Safety, and with that Duty which we owe to the rest of Mankind. Husbands must love their Wives with a most tender Affection; of which they must give all the Proof they can in all their Actions: And Wives must in like Manner love and also be obedient to their Husbands, and each of them must be strictly just and faithful to the other in all Things. Parents must honestly endeavour to provide for their Children, and to teach and breed them up in such a Manner as may be best both for their Souls and Bodies, diligently and

and tend
from all
them in
ing, and
out Bitt
given to
Mistress
Servants
not only
also with
Masters
nisters o
their Liv
Teaching
ful Doct
of all the
as much
tion of
Charge;
must pay
sters, fo
giving a
they can
hearkeni
wholefor
do or sh
all Magi
tions, m
der ther
stitutions
Diligenc
vour, or

made Easy to the meanest Capacity. 25

and tenderly watching over them, to keep them from all Harm, countenancing and encouraging them in every Thing that is good; and reproofing, and sometimes correcting them, but without Bitterness or Passion, when they find them given to any Thing that is evil. Masters and Mistresses must be just and merciful to their Servants, and Servants must behave themselves not only with Faithfulness and Diligence, but also with Obedience and Respect towards their Masters and Mistresses. The Pastors and Ministers of God's Church must be exemplary in their Lives, diligent and industrious in their Teaching and Preaching of wholesome and useful Doctrine, and administering and dispensing of all the Ordinances of God, that they may, as much as in them lies, promote the Salvation of the Souls that are committed to their Charge; And the People, on the other hand, must pay a Respect to their Pastors and Ministers, for their Work and Function's sake; giving as constant and reverent Attendance as they can upon all Holy Offices, and carefully hearkening to, and putting in practice, all such wholesome Directions and Instructions, as they do or shall receive from them. And lastly, all Magistrates and Rulers, in their several Stations, must govern the People that are under them, according to the Laws and Constitutions of the Land, administering Justice with Diligence and Dispatch, and without Fear, Favour, or Affection, of or to any Man; only always

ways tempering (as much as in them lies) the Rigour and Severity of Human Laws, with that Equity, Moderation, and Mercy, that the Law of God requires, and is consistent with the Publick Good. And the People, on the other hand, must behave themselves towards their Rulers with Honour and Reverence to their Persons, and Submission and Obedience to their lawful Authority, making Conscience of performing whatever the Law of the Land requires, except it should so fall out, that something is thereby commanded, which is evidently contrary to God's Law: There being nothing else that can excuse a Subject from giving Obedience to the Laws and Constitutions of that Government under which he lives, except he can make it appear, that God himself requires the contrary from him.

And thus I have done with the second Thing which God requires from us, which is Obedience to those Laws or Rules that he has given us. I come now to the third and last Thing that God requires from us, and that is *Repentance*; which, although it may be reckoned as a Part of our Obedience, because it is a Thing commanded by God, yet since it has an equal Relation to every one of the Divine Laws, of which I have but now been giving an Account, I thought it might not be improper to reserve it here to be spoken of in the last Place.

Now,

mad

Now

the La

liable to

first Ste

tance an

sorrowfu

ed so G

ful a Go

ger. B

be judg

of it; bu

of his Si

to forsak

can be sa

ful for th

in the ne

ble Ackr

to God:

this, it i

own Con

Sins to h

Time wh

humbly

sake of Je

put on fer

will amer

the Time

wrong in

whatsoever

stitution to

to conclud

these Reso

Now, when a Man has transgressed any of the Laws of God, and thereby made himself liable to his Wrath and eternal Damnation; the first Step that he must take, in order to Repentance and Reconciliation with him, is to be truly sorrowful for his Sins, whereby he has provoked so Good and Gracious, so Just and Powerful a God, and run himself into so great Danger. But the Truth of this Sorrow is not to be judged of by the Violence or Passionateness of it; but that Man who has such a due Sense of his Sins, as to be effectually moved thereby to forsake and amend them; He, and he only, can be said to be truly and acceptably sorrowful for them. Now this Sorrow for Sin must, in the next Place, move him to make an humble Acknowledgment and Confession of them to God: And that he may the better perform this, it is necessary that he often examine his own Conscience, and endeavour to bring his Sins to his Remembrance. And at the same Time when he confesses his Sins, he must also humbly beg God's Pardon for them for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, who died for us; and must put on serious and stedfast Resolutions, that he will amend them, and lead a better Life for the Time to come; and that if he has done any wrong in Word or Deed to any other Man whatsoever, he will make Reparation and Restitution to him, to the best of his Power: And to conclude all, he must strictly keep and fulfil these Resolutions when he has made them; or else

28 *The Knowledge of Religion made Easy.*

else all that has gone before will signify nothing. For indeed Reformation or Amendment of Life is the only Thing that completes and makes up the true Nature of Repentance.

And thus I have endeavoured to give a brief and plain Account of all that God requires as necessary to Salvation. And God of his Mercy direct us to believe and practise accordingly, and grant that in the End we may enjoy the Reward of all, even eternal Happiness, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

F I N I S .

Books printed for *T. Trye*, near *Gray's Inn Gate*, *Holbourn*.

I. **P**LAIN *Instructions* for the *Young and Ignorant*, comprised in a short and easy *Exposition* of the *Church Catechism*, adapted to the Understanding and Memory of those of the meanest Capacity. The *seventh* Edition. Price 3*d.* or 20*s.* per Hundred.

II. Some short and plain *Directions* for spending one *Day* well, by which (if every *Day* carefully observed) a *Man* may be much enabled (through *God's Grace*) to spend his whole *Life* well. The *seventh* Edition. Price 1*d.* or 6*s.* per Hundred.

III. A *Help* to the devout *Performance* of private *Prayer*. The *second* Edition. Price 1*d.* or 6*s.* per Hundred.

IV. Some *Rules* for the *Conduct* of *Human Life*, shewing the *Way of Living*: 1. Wisely. 2. Harmoniously. 3. Peaceably and Quietly. 4. In *Business*. 5. In much *Business*. 6. In the *Intervals* of *Business*. 7. In *Travel*. Price 3*d.* or 20*s.* per Hundred.

V. The *Way* to *Eternal Salvation* plainly pointed out. Price 2*d.* or 12*s.* per Hundred.

VI. The *Rule* of *Self-Examination*, or the only *Way* of banishing *Doubts* and *Scruples*, and directing the *Conscience* in the *satisfactory Practice* of all *Christian Duties*. The *second* Edition. Price 4*d.* or 1*l.* 5*s.* per Hundred.

VII.

VII. A moderate Ca that concern a Paraphrase Price 6*d.*

VIII. A In a Letter Price 4*d.*

IX. Cat the Number Edition. Price

X. A B Christianity; an Appendix, i gested in th tant Questio conduce to Churches.

XI. The Quaker con 6*s.* per. Hu

XII. A union of Hundred.

XIII. A Charitable the Church

XIV. F commende

XV. T gion. The

XVI. E Religion. I

XVII. T Episcopacy

XVIII. all Christia

XIX. T mons at St Price 3*d.*

XX. Ho preached a Price 3*d.*

VII. A *plain and easy Method*, whereby a *Man of moderate Capacity* may arrive at *full Satisfaction* in all *Things* that concern his *Everlasting Salvation*: To which is added a *Paraphrase* on *St. Athanasius's Creed*. The *second Edition*. Price 6*d.* or 5*s.* per Dozen.

VIII. A *Persuasive* to the *Study* of the *Holy Scriptures*: In a *Letter* to a *sober Gentleman* of the *Church of Rome*. Price 4*d.* or 1*l.* 5*s.* per Hundred.

IX. *Catholick Christianity*, or an *Essay* towards lessening the *Number of Controversies* among *Christians*. The *second Edition*. Price 4*d.* or 1*l.* 5*s.* per Hundred.

X. A *Brief Discourse* of the *Fundamentals* of *Christianity*; and the *Use* that is to be made of them. With an *Appendix*, in which, from the *Principles* laid down or suggested in the *Discourse*, an *Answer* is given to *three* important *Questions*; the *Determination* whereof would much conduce to the *restoring Communion* between different *Churches*. Price 4*d.* or 1*l.* 5*s.* per Hundred.

XI. The *true Nature* of an *Oath*; a *Letter* to a *sober Quaker* concerning his *solemn Affirmation*, &c. Price 1*d.* or 6*s.* per Hundred.

XII. A *Charitable Address* to all who are of the *Communion* of the *Church of Rome*. Price 6*d.* or 2*l.* 2*s.* a Hundred.

XIII. An *Answer* to two *Objections* made against the *Charitable Address*, to all who are of the *Communion* of the *Church of Rome*. Price 6*d.*

XIV. *Free-thinking* in *Matters of Religion* stated and recommended. The *second Edition*. Price 4*d.*

XV. The *Authority* of the *Church* in *Matters of Religion*. The *second Edition*. Price 4*d.*

XVI. *Eternal Salvation* the *only End* and *Design* of *Religion*. Price 3*d.*

XVII. The *Divine Authority* of *Church Government* and *Episcopacy* stated and asserted upon *Principles* common to all *Christians*. Price 4*d.*

XVIII. A *Sermon* preached before the *House of Commons* at *St. Andrew's Church Dublin*, *October 23, 1711*. Price 3*d.*

XIX. The *Wisdom* of being *Religious*. A *Sermon* preached at the *Castle Chapel* in *Dublin*, *Feb. 20, 1703-4*. Price 3*d.* or 20*s.* per Hundred.

XX. *Honesty* the *best Policy*; an *Essay* concerning the *true*

true Way of rendering a Nation happy, and its Government firm and lasting. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXI. An Essay on *Foolish Questions*: Another on *Con- tending for the Faith*. Being the Substance of two Visitation Sermons. Matt. xiii. 25. *While Men slept, the Enemy came and sowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his Way*. Price 6d. or 5s. per Dozen.

XXII. St. *Paul's* Description of his own Religion, opened and explained. The *second* Edition. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

XXIII. Religion tried by the Test of sober and impar- tial Reason. The *third* Edition corrected. Price 1s.

XXIV. The True Church-man set in a just and clear Light; or an Essay towards the Right Character of a Faithful Son of the Established Church. The *second* Edition. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

XXV. Sober Thoughts for the Cure of Melancholy, especially that which is Religious. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXVI. A sincere Christian and Convert from the Church of *Rome*, exemplified in the Case of *Daniel Herley*, a poor *Irish* Peasant. Price 3d. or 20s. per Hundred.

XXVII. An Abstract of the Church Catechism, briefly containing the Substance of all that is necessary to Salva- tion. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXVIII. A Discourse of Confirmation. Containing proper Instructions for such as are to be confirmed. Humbly offered to the Consideration of all Parents, and others, who have the Care of educating Youth. Price 2d. or 12s. per Hundred.

XXIX. Advice to a young Divine concerning Preach- ing. Price 1d. or 6s. per Hundred.

XXX. Two Tracts; the one, Directions to a sober Christian for the acceptable Offering up the *Lord's Prayer* to God in his Private Devotions; the other, Sober Thoughts on the Doctrine of Predestination. Price 1d. or 6s. per Hundred.

XXXI. The Root and Spring of true Virtue and Piety; a Sermon preached at *Tuam*, much enlarged. Price 4d. or 1l. 5s. per Hundred.

N. B. The before-mentioned Thirty-one Tracts, are all written by the most Reverend Dr. *Edward Synge*, late Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in Ireland.

3
A PLAIN and EASY
METHOD,

Whereby a Man of a
Moderate Capacity

May arrive at

FULL SATISFACTION

In all things that concern his

Everlasting Salvation.

To which is added, A

PARAPHRASE

ON

St. *Athanasius's* Creed.

By the most Reverend Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,
Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in Ireland.

Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? Gen. xviii. 25.
Are not my ways equal? Ezek. xviii. 29.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N,

Printed for THOMAS TRYE, near *Grays-Inn-Gate* in
Holbourn. MDCCXXXVII.

Pri ce 6d. or 5s. a Dozen.



P



the least p

First,

by urged a

Religion,

midst of

acquire in

Second

into which

are able t

Notions,

that the e

ry Man's

And,

Illustrati

the cleari

yet still t

rive to t

Doubts a

withstand

they find



THE P R E F A C E.



*H*E who has often to deal with the Consciences of Men, may soon find that amongst other Difficulties under which they sometimes labour, these three are, to many, none of the least perplexing.

First, That they find more Doctrines frequently urged and pressed upon them, as Matters of Religion, than what they are able, or, in the midst of all their Affairs, have Opportunity, to enquire into.

Secondly, That of several of those Doctrines, into which they have endeavoured to enquire, they are able to frame but very obscure and imperfect Notions, altho' at the same time they are told, that the explicit Belief of them is necessary to every Man's eternal Salvation.

And, Thirdly, That notwithstanding all the Illustrations and Arguments that are brought for the clearing up and confirming of these Doctrines, yet still the utmost Assent, which they do or can give to them, is not altogether free from some Doubts and Hesitations, which sometimes, notwithstanding all their Endeavours to the contrary, they find unavoidably to arise in their Minds.

P R E F A C E.

For the Satisfaction chiefly of such Persons as these (whose Thoughts I have commonly found to be most afflicting to them) I published many Years since two little Books (of which I have made mention § XXXIX.) and lately a third, to which I gave this Title, Religion tryed by the Test of sober and impartial Reason; but finding upon a serious Review of the whole, that something yet farther and more expressly might, and therefore ought to be said for the Cure of those more especially, in whose Minds the Malady has taken very deep Root, I have once more endeavoured (and I hope not impertinently) to offer something which may be of solid Comfort and Use to them.

*That I may the more easily convey my Thoughts into the Mind of my Reader, I have taken upon me the Person (which I suppose him to be) of an Enquirer into Religion; and have endeavoured to advance, with all possible Clearness, from one Step to another, until I arrive at that Satisfaction, which at my first setting out I suppose myself to have wanted. And if any one, of our own established Church particularly, shall be offended with me, as guilty, in his Opinion, of too much Moderation; I desire him seriously to consider these Words in the second Part of our Homily, Of the Knowledge of Holy Scripture. "Those
 " things in the Scripture that be plain to under-
 " stand, and necessary for Salvation, every
 " Man's Duty is to learn them, to print them
 " in Memory, and effectually to exercise them.
 " And as for the dark Mysteries, to be con-*

" tented

" tente
 " time
 " thing
 " if he
 " God
 When
 Discour
 of it, u
 § XXV
 even the
 be amiss
 down in
 1. It
 keep his
 the Rece
 as God
 2. If
 such Tru
 proper
 necessity
 3. Bu
 true, wi
 altogethe
 ly dispos
 4. Pr
 consists in
 lingsness
 ever Tru
 to us; t
 Evidence
 Doctrin
 (in oppos

P R E F A C E.

"tented to be ignorant in them, until such
"time as it shall please God to open those
"things unto him. In the mean season (N. B.)
"if he lack either Aptness or Opportunity,
"God will not impute it to his Folly.

When the Reader comes to § XXII. of this Discourse, I desire him to suspend his Judgment of it, until he has read and seriously considered § XXVII, XL, XLI, XLII. And lest he should even then mistake my Meaning, I think it may not be amiss here again distinctly and briefly to lay it down in the following Propositions.

1. *It is the indispensable Duty of every Man to keep his Mind always in a fitting Disposition for the Reception of, and assenting unto all such Truths, as God shall be pleased to propose unto him.*

2. *If the Mind be thus fittingly disposed, and such Truth sufficiently proposed unto it, with its proper Evidence, the Act of Assent thereunto of necessity follows, and cannot be with-held.*

3. *But to give Assent to any thing, as being true, without sufficient Evidence for the same, is altogether unreasonable, and (if the Mind be rightly disposed and under no Delusion) impossible.*

4. *Properly speaking then, the Duty of Faith consists in nothing else but a Readiness and Willingness to seek for, receive, and embrace, whatever Truth God shall be pleased any way to propose to us; the Authority or Testimony of God being Evidence beyond Exception for the Truth of any Doctrine; and such Readiness and Willingness (in opposition to all Partiality and Prejudice) be-*

P R E F A C E.

ing that very Disposition of Mind which we are always bound to preserve.

5. But the formal Act of Assent (alone considered) neither is nor can be a Duty. For if the Authority or Testimony of God, or any other Evidence for a Proposition or Doctrine, appears to be sufficient, the Assent is necessary, and follows of course: But if the Evidence does not appear to be sufficient, then the Assent is unreasonable and impossible.

When the Reader has well consider'd what I have said upon this Argument in the Discourse itself, I cannot but think that he will be of my Opinion.

Whether the Interpretation which I have given [§ XLVII.] of those Words in our Office of Baptism [All this I stedfastly believe] may at first Sight please every one, is more than I will venture to say; but if any one excepts against it, I desire he would give me his Opinion upon the following Case.

A Man bred up in Infidelity, but now in a good measure convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity, applies himself to one of our Bishops (suppose) for Baptism; the Bishop examines him in the fundamental Principles of our Religion, and, finding that he has a true Notion of the Meaning of them, he farther demands whether he heartily and stedfastly believes these things of which he has thus given an Account? The Man answers, that he cannot indeed say that his Mind is altogether free from Doubt and Hesitation, which sometimes he finds to arise within him, and may probably proceed

P R E F A C E.

need either from the Weakness of his Understanding, or (it may be) from some Suggestion of an evil Spirit; but this with all Sincerity he affirms, that he is so far convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity, and the Doctrines of Faith deliver'd by it, that he firmly purposes and resolves (thro' the Grace of God) not only to make Profession of them as long as he lives, but also constantly to lead his Life in the most exact Conformity thereunto that possibly he can, and in the Performance of all those Duties which are either expressly prescribed by that Religion, or rationally to be deduc'd from the Principles of it.

I demand whether the Bishop might lawfully deny Baptism unto such a Man for want of a stedfast Belief? And if not, then it is plain that no more is or ought to be meant by a stedfast Belief, than according to the Account which I have given thereof in the above-nam'd Section.

But the greatest Objection that I conceive will be made against this Discourse, is, that, by supposing that God may possibly extend some Mercy even to those who are altogether ignorant of Christianity, I may seem to have given too much Encouragement to Infidelity: to obviate which therefore I desire it may be observed, that all that I have said touching this Point is plainly reducible to these three Propositions.

First, That as far as any Man's Ignorance or Error is occasioned by any Neglect or Fault of his own, so far there is all the Reason that may be to believe that God will punish him for the same.

P R E F A C E.

Secondly, *That if a Man, even without any Fault or Neglect of his own, is ignorant of, or mistaken in those things, which, according to the Tenour of the Gospel, are necessary to our Eternal Salvation; he can have no Title to that Reward which God, thro' Jesus Christ, has only promis'd to true Believers.*

Thirdly, *However absolute the Authority of God our Creator is over all the Work of his own Hands, yet it cannot be suppos'd that he, who is infinitely good and merciful, will inflict Everlasting Misery upon any Man, for that which is no way to be ascrib'd or justly imputed to any Neglect or Fault of his own.*

Now altho' what I have thus said may tend to vindicate Christianity from that Cruelty, with which some falsely charge it, as if it doom'd all Men indifferently to the Flames of Hell who do not embrace and profess it (and that in its Truth and Purity) without any Allowance made even for their involuntary and invincible Ignorance or Errors; yet how this should give Encouragement to any to continue in Infidelity, Error, or Ignorance of any Truth that may be profitable to his Eternal Salvation, in case he has any way of being better inform'd, is more than I am able to imagine.

A PLAIN



A

PLAIN and EASY

METHOD, &c.

I.  Amongst all the Disputes and Controversies which for so many Ages have exercised the Wit and Industry of Mankind, there is, in my Judgment, but one single Enquiry that can fully recompence the utmost Labour and Diligence we can bestow upon it: And that is, *What is necessary to be done in order to the avoiding of everlasting Misery, and the Attainment of eternal Happiness?*

II. I grant indeed that it is but a foolish piece of Cynical Moroseness for a Man to *despise*, or *reject* either Riches, or Honour, or Learning, or any thing that may be an Instrument of doing Good, or even of innocent Comfort or Delight either to himself or others; provided that for the obtaining of it he neither violates his Conscience, nor sacrifices his Quiet and Contentment of Mind. However, if my Endeavours after any of these things prove altogether unsuccessful, I find it is at least *possible* for a Man to bear the want of them: But having an unalterable Persuasion in my Mind that my Soul is immortal, and that after this short and troublesome Life shall have an end, I must of necessity enter upon a State, either of Joy or Misery, that is to last to all Eternity; as often as I seriously think of this (and every Man I believe sometimes must think of it whether he will or no) I find it absolutely impossible to have the
least

least true Comfort or Satisfaction within myself (whatever my worldly Condition may be) as long as I remain uncertain concerning the Way and Method to be taken for the avoiding what I cannot but dread and the obtaining of what I necessarily and above all other things desire.

III. All that is or can possibly be necessary on my part for the escaping of this future Misery, and attainment of Happiness, is to *keep the Commandments* of God, *Mat. xix. 17. Luke x. 28.* and thereby secure his Favours to me. So says our Blessed Saviour in express Terms: And if we suppose our everlasting Portion in the Life to come, to be assigned to every Man by no other Authority but that of God himself (in which all Religions whatsoever do fully agree) it cannot be imagined that any thing which he has *no way commanded* (that is to say neither expressly, nor by Consequence) should be any way necessary in order to the obtaining a Share of that Reward, of which he alone has the sole and entire Distribution.

IV. If any one shall tell me, that it is not enough for me to *keep God's Commandments*; but that, in order to my Salvation, it is necessary also that I believe those *doctrinal Truths* which he has made known unto us; or those, at the least, which we commonly call *Articles of Faith*; I answer, that whatever God has commanded me to believe, I am certainly bound to believe accordingly; and if I do not so believe, I am justly to be punished with eternal Damnation. But if a Doctrine be in itself never so true, yet if God has no way laid any Command upon me to *believe* it, in this case, not to believe is no Sin, *for where no Law* (or in other Terms no Command) *is, there is no Transgression*; that is to say, no Sin, *Rom. xiv. 15.* nor, consequently, can this

this my want of Belief be any Bar or Obstruction to my Salvation.

V. *Obedience*, truly such, to a Command of God, always, in the very nature of the thing, presupposes sufficient Knowledge both of the thing to be done, and also of its being required by God. For if I am ignorant of the former of these, it must be by *Chance* and not *Choice*, if my Action be conformable to the Rule that is given me; and if of the latter, whatever I may chance to do, it must proceed from some other Principle, and not that of *Obedience*.

VI. That therefore I may arrive at that full Satisfaction and Conviction of Mind, which in this whole Affair I seek for, it must be my Business carefully to enquire, *First*, By what Rule I may at all times know, whether God has commanded such or such a thing, or not. And, *Secondly* (by a due Attendance to this Rule) what are all the several and particular things, which make up the Matter and Import of his Commands.

VII. But here let me note, once for all, that under this Expression, *viz. God's Commands*, or *Commandments*, we are always to comprehend his *Prohibitions* also: His *negative Precepts*, such as *Thou shalt not commit Adultery*, *Thou shalt not Steal*, being always called his *Commandments*, as well as his *positive* ones, such as *Remember to keep Holy the Sabbath Day*, and *Honour thy Father and thy Mother*.

VIII. By a *Command*, properly speaking, we always mean, *The Will of a lawful Superior signified to an Inferior as a Rule whereby he is required to act*. He who has no lawful Authority over me, let him signify his Will to me in what manner soever, yet such signification (however it may be an Usurpation or presumption, or by what other Name we may call it) is not, in Propriety of Speech, to be looked upon as a *Command*, or as such to be obeyed.

IX. That

IX. That God is mine and every Creatures lawful Superior, is beyond all doubt. Now the Will of God is either a Rule to his own Actions; and then we call it his *Decree*; or to the necessary Actions of his Creatures; and then we call it the *Law of Creation*; or to the voluntary Actions of such of his Creatures as are intelligent, and have the Freedom of Choice; and this same Will of God, when it is signified to any such Creature, as a Rule whereby he is required to act, is what we call the *Command of God* or the *Law of God*, as the Word *Law* is commonly understood in the moral Sense and Meaning of it.

X. From the very Nature and Definition of a Command, thus laid down, it most evidently follows, that however God may have been pleased to signify his Will as a Rule of Action unto others, yet this cannot be a Command to me, except I know it, or at least have sufficient Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of it. When the Matter of a Law is framed, and put into proper Words, yet it does not receive its Satisfaction; that is to say, it is in effect no Law, until it is promulged: Nor does the Will of God become a Command until it is signified, that is to say, made known to those who are to obey it, [§ VIII.]

XI. If we will speak properly, wherever a Command is, there must be, First, A Person commanding, and, Secondly, a Person commanded. And if all the rest of Mankind were commanded by God to do a thing, yet if I am not commanded among the rest, the Command is to me no Command: Nor can I be said to be commanded, except the Command be directed to me; and how can any Command be said to be directed to him to whom it is not signified; that is to say, who neither knows any thing of it, nor has the Means or Opportunity of such Knowledge?

XII. If it be objected that even the Servant who knew not his Lord's Will, was yet to be beaten, tho' he

with few Sa
answer, th
ed Saviour
ose that a
re must ne
eason and
ble (for f
ignorance v
himself;
Will, must
ction, th
ant, who
et not to h
But if we
oy of com
and conseq
e least an
ished him
at which
therefore w
ave been
and theref
Approbat
be absur
to inte
ately negat
e, he shal
om of He
manner he
necessarily re
urance to
e beaten v
not be be
XIII. T
requiring
lf (for Ex
ny Child

With *few Stripes*, for not performing it, *Luke xii. 48.*
 answer, that in the Interpretation of all our Blessed Saviour's *moral Discourses* (and more especially those that are wrapt up in parabolical Expressions) we must never depart from the Rules of evident Reason and plain natural Equity. If then in this Parable (for such it is) we suppose that this Servant's Ignorance was occasioned by some want of Diligence in himself; his Fault, in not performing his Master's Will, must also be supposed to deserve some Correction, tho' not so great as that of his Fellow-servant, who is said to have *known his Lord's Will*, and yet *not to have prepared himself nor done accordingly.* But if we suppose that the ignorant Servant had *no way* of coming to the knowledge of his Lord's Will, and consequently that this his Ignorance was not in the least any Fault of his; for his Lord to have punished him but with *one single Stripe* for not doing that which he could not possibly know, and which therefore was impossible for him to perform, would have been an unreasonable *Cruelty*, if not *Injustice*, and therefore cannot be supposed to have the least Approbation from our Blessed Saviour. Neither will it be absurd, where the Reason of the thing requires it, to interpret a *diminutive* Expression in an *absolutely negative* Sense: *He shall be called the least* (that is, he shall not be reckoned at all as) *in the Kingdom of Heaven*, *Mat. v. 19.* And why not in like manner here (since the Rules of Reason do as necessarily require it, if we suppose the Servant's Ignorance to have been *absolutely invincible*) he *shall be beaten with few Stripes*; that is to say, he shall not be beaten at all?

XIII. The giving of a Command necessarily implies requiring the Performance of the thing commanded. If (for Example) I should say an hundred times to my Child or Servant, *I command you to do such a thing,*

thing, and at the same time it sufficiently appears that I do *not really require* the Performance of what thus in Words I seem to command, my *verbal Command*, in this Case, is plainly *no real* one; that is to say, it is *no Command at all*. And if in like manner it appears that there is any thing which God neither does, nor can be supposed to *require* from any Man, such a thing as this can never be the Matter of any Command of his, however the form of Words may seem in outward Appearance to extend themselves to it. Now whosoever is truly *just and wise*, *cannot*, and he that is *good and merciful* most certainly *will not* require any thing from any person that is *impossible*, or beyond his Ability to perform. If therefore it be ever pretended that any thing of that Sort is commanded by God, it must be a Mistake; for no Truth can be more evident than this that *whatsoever is impossible to be done, can never be the Matter of a Divine Command*.

XIV. In the very Nature and Notion of a *Command*, as given to a voluntary Agent, it is also necessarily implied that it is in the Power of the Person to whom the Command is given, *not to do* the thing commanded. For instance, It may, upon occasion be proper to command a Child to eat his Food but supposing him constantly and regularly so to do to command him to *grow in Stature, and Bigness* would be altogether absurd. The reason is, because this is what he must *necessarily* do, and *cannot avoid* until such time as he is come to his full Growth. The like may be said of commanding a healthy Man to be hungry when he is long without Meat, or thirsty without Drink, or cold when he is in the Snow, or hot when he is in a warm Bath; for these are things of *natural Necessity*, and not of *voluntary Choice*, and therefore are altogether *uncapable* of being the Matter of a Command. If therefore any one, upon

occasion, shall tell me that *God has commanded me* to do this, or that thing, which yet I cannot avoid doing if I would, but must of Necessity do whether I will or no, I must look upon this also as a Mistake; and that for the Reason which I have just now given.

XV. Fabulous Stories and feigned Miracles, cunningly contrived, and confidently imposed upon ignorant or unthinking Men; Custom and Tradition, which, from a slender Beginning, may in Tract of Time grow strong and prevalent; the Authority of Men in Power, or of Repute for their supposed Learning or Sanctity; temporal Encouragement on the one hand, or Persecution on the other; or whatever else may have an Influence upon the *Imagination* or Passions of Mankind; all or any of these things, may, by themselves alone be very instrumental in supporting and maintaining of *Superstition*, whose Residence is chiefly in the *Fancy*: But *true Religion*, which is a *sober and serious Persuasion of the Mind* (whatever collateral Helps may be given it) must always necessarily have its *ultimate Foundation* in clear and solid *Reason*. If I were not first *Rational*, it would be impossible that I could ever be truly *Religious*; and if I had not a well grounded *Reason of the Hope that is in me* [1 Pet. iii. 15.] my Religion would be no better than a *House built upon the Sand* [Mat. 7. 26.] or indeed a Castle in the Air.

XVI. To give a few short Hints of some of the Proofs which may be brought for Religion: It is a self-evident Principle, engrafted in every Man's *Reason*, that *where no Cause is, there can be no Effect*. If ever therefore we could suppose that there was so much as *one Instant* wherein *nothing* did at all exist, it is Demonstration that nothing could ever be produced into Existence: From whence the Consequence is no less than indubitable, that therefore there is some first and eternal Cause of all those Effects

fects which have been and are daily produced; that is, in other Terms, that *there is a Being who made all other things, but is Himself without Beginning* whom we call by the Name of GOD.

XVII. And, after the same manner, every other Truth in Religion is, by a longer or shorter Train of Consequences, to be deduced from some of the plain and self-evident Principles of *Reason*. Thus (for Example) from the many illustrious Marks of *Wisdom* in the Contrivance of all the several Parts of the World, of *Power* in the Frame and Structure of it, and of *Goodness* and *Beneficence* in that Provision, which therein is made for the well being of all sorts of Creatures according to their several Capacities, it is most clearly proved, even antecedent to Revelation, that *God, who made the World, is a most wise, powerful, good, and beneficent Being; and, consequently, as such, to be loved, adored, worshiped, and relied upon.* From the Prophecies recorded in the *Old Testament*, and fulfilled in the Person of our Blessed *Saviour*, it is evidently proved that *he is the Messiah* whom God had promised to send into the World; our own *Reason* sufficiently assuring us that none but God could foretel so many Particulars, in themselves contingent, so many Years before they came to pass. From the many Miracles that were wrought by *Christ* and his Disciples, it is beyond Contradiction proved that *Christianity is from God; Reason* itself most clearly informing us, that He only who is the Author of Nature, could thus controul it and alter its Course; and from the bitter Sufferings and Persecutions which so many underwent, purely for the Testimony which they gave to these Miracles and Doctrine, the Truth of the Matter of Fact is abundantly established: *Reason* here again informing us that such a number of Men (and such Men especially as they were, both for their Honesty and Simplicity) neither

neither c
combine
profitabl
most un

XVIII.

Holy Scr
Beginnin
as they w
obtained

beyond C
they were
tain the l

uring me
titude of
igion, to

were not a
and from
corruptin

titudes of
them, for
in their se

infers t
Copies an
cessions,

certainly
Christianit
Diversity

not able to
as render
no reasona

from such
the Will of
on upon
XIX. I
urther; b
uch, to p
man gives

neither could if they would, nor would if they could, combine together in this manner to impose an unprofitable Lye (for if it were a Lye, it must be a most unprofitable one) upon the World.

XVIII. From the universal Authority which the Holy Scriptures of the *Old Testament* from the very Beginning, and those of the *New Testament* as soon as they were published and made known, everywhere obtained throughout the whole Christian Church, it beyond Controversy follows that those Writings, as they were at that time extant, did authentickly contain the Doctrine of Christianity: My Reason assuring me that it was impossible for such a vast Multitude of People, as far and near professed that Religion, to combine together in receiving Books that were not agreeable to the Doctrine received by them; and from the evident Impossibility of universally corrupting those Books in the Hands of such Multitudes of Men as had them, and constantly studied them, some in their original Languages and others in their several Translations; my Reason most clearly infers that wherever all, or almost all, the several Copies and Translations do agree in the same Expressions, or exactly in the same Sense, there we certainly have the true and primitive Doctrine of Christianity. And if in some few Passages some Diversity of Words or Expressions, which I am not able to rectify, or any other Cause whatsoever, has rendered the Meaning so obscure as that I have no reasonable way whereby to fix and determine it; from such Passages as these I cannot at all infer what the Will of God is, or establish any Point of Religion upon them, or any of them.

XIX. I shall prosecute this Point at present no farther; but I thought it not improper to say thus much, to put my Reader in mind that whatever any Man gives a just Assent to in Matters of Religion,

must at the last appear to be founded upon, and supported by *Reason*. No Man can give a *just Assent* to any thing that is not *self-evident* (and therefore needs no Proof) except the Truth of it be inferred from something else, to which, as being true, he already has given a *just Assent*; and this, in like manner, must either be *self-evident*, or else inferred from some *other* Truth that is already assented to. So that either we must for ever be going back, and can never begin to prove any thing at all; or else our Proof must *begin with*, and so be originally *founded upon* some Truth that is *evident by its own native Light*, and therefore stands in no need of being *proved*. But *Reason* is the only Faculty that is capable of receiving or apprehending the *native Evidence* of such a Truth; therefore either we must never offer to make any Proof of Religion at all (an Absurdity which no Man sure will maintain) or the Truth of it must ultimately, and at the last, rest upon the *Principles of Reason*: Nor is there any Doctrine or Rule of *natural Religion*, but what may be very clearly established upon such Principles: And whatever is made known unto us by *Revelation*, is all supported by this one uncontrollable *Reason*, viz. *God*, who cannot lye, *has given his authentic Testimony to it; therefore it is true*: Or *God*, who is the supreme Lord of all, *has commanded it; therefore it is obligatory*.

XX. Since then by being a *Christian* I do not cease to be a *Man*, nor does *Revelation* destroy my *Reason*, but plainly offers itself to be soberly examined thereby, there being no other possible Way to gain my *just Assent* to it; I shall make the best use I can of *Reason* and *Revelation* together, in order to make the clearest Discovery that possibly I can, of all the several *Commands* that *God* has been pleased to lay upon me.

XXI. What

XXI.

possible to
Command

is natura

to say, v

ere and

naturally in

Art and L

with Wi

so for a

Hammer

ician; n

ility for

ed of the

to such A

iders the

and Good

will no

the latter

XXII.

or Proof

it is not

it; and i

appears t

give my A

XIII, X

or from a

Schools s

of God; a

ed or requ

be on som

lies (whi

culative

XLI, XL

XXIII

Informati

ver had h

XXI. When I say [§ XIII.] that *whatsoever is impossible to be done, can never be the Matter of a Divine Command*; by *impossible*, I mean not only that which is *naturally*, but also whatever is *morally* so; that is to say, whatever is *beyond the reach of a Man's sincere and diligent Endeavours*. For Example, It is *naturally impossible* for a Man to fly, because all the Art and Industry in the World can never furnish him with Wings for that purpose; but it is only *morally* so for a poor Man, who is bred to the Spade or Hammer, to become a great Linguist or Mathematician; not that he wants a Capacity or *natural Ability* for it, but because he is altogether unfurnished of the Means, whereby alone he might arrive unto such Attainments. And whosoever seriously considers the *Wisdom and Justice*, as well as the *Mercy and Goodness* of God, will easily conclude that he will no more *require*, nor consequently *command*, the latter of these things than the former.

XXII. If at any time I have sufficient Evidence or Proof of the Truth of a Doctrine or Proposition, it is not in my power to *with-hold my Assent* from it; and if I want such Proof or Evidence as to me appears to be sufficient, it is as impossible for me to *give my Assent unto it*. From whence it follows [by § XIII, XIV.] that *to give or with hold my Assent to, or from any Doctrine, cannot* (formally taken as the Schools speak) *be the subject Matter of any Command of God*; and therefore, if *Faith* be a thing *commanded or required* by him (as most certainly it is) it must be on some other account, and not only as a *bare Belief* (which is one sort of *Assent*) given to any speculative Truth whatsoever. [See farther, § XL, XLI, XLII.]

XXIII. If, for want of some sort of reasonable Information, or of Capacity of Understanding, I never had had any the least Apprehension of God, or

his Will (which is taken to be the Case of some poor savage People in the World) it could not then have been said that God had *given me any manner of Command at all*; for to whom God's Will is *not at all signified*, to him no Command from God is given [§ VIII.] And where there is no sufficient, either Information to give, or Capacity to receive any manner of Knowledge or Apprehension of any thing to such a Man that thing, whatsoever it is, can never be said to have been *signified*; nor can any one be said to have *received a Command*, or that it is *directed* to him, except he *knows* it, or at least has some Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of it, [§ X, XI.] From whence it follows, that if I had always been and continu'd in such a State of profound and invincible Ignorance, I could not at that while have been said to have *broken any Command of God*, having never *received any*, and consequently, whatever he might be pleas'd in such a Case to do to me by his *absolute Authority* (which by his Creatures ought always to be submitted to and never disputed) he could not be said to *punish me for my Disobedience*; for he that has *received no Command*, cannot be truly said to have been *disobedient* to any.

XXIV. But having been often told and assur'd (by some who appear to have lov'd me, and by many who could have no Interest to deceive me) that there is a God most wise, good, just, and powerful, who made all things, and has given unto Mankind certain Commands or Laws, by which he requires that they should regulate their Actions, whereof he will one Day demand a strict Account from them; even thus much Notice itself, if as yet I had no more, I take to be a sufficient *Signification of God's Will*; that is to say, [§ VIII.] a *Command from God to me* that I should with all Seriousness make a farther and strict

Enquiry

Enquiry into these Matters; and if there be a great Day of Account to come (and who can assure me that there is not?) what *Excuse* can I be supposed to make for myself when I shall be taxed with the Breach of all God's Commands? If I should plead for myself that I did not *know* them, and therefore cannot be said to have *disobey'd* them; it may be reply'd, that I had Warning sufficient given me to have put me upon a diligent *Enquiry* after them, which if I neglected to make, I am altogether inexcusable; the least [*probable*] Intimation that is any way given to an *Inferior* of the Will of his *Superior* being sufficient to lay him under an Obligation at least to make farther Search, if haply he may come to a fuller and clearer Discovery of it; the Servant who has sufficient Opportunity of knowing his Lord's Will, but declines it, is almost as much to blame, I think, as he who knows it, yet does not perform it, and therefore most justly comes under the like Condemnation of being *beaten with many Stripes*, Luke xii. 47.

XXV. To make the best Enquiry (then) that I can into the Will of God, in order to the Regulation of all my Actions thereby, is so very evidently my Duty, that it is not possible for me to have a fuller Condemnation of any Truth whatsoever; and if I am negligent, or do any way prevaricate in this great and important Search, my own Conscience must condemn me, and plainly tell me that I most justly deserve the utmost Punishment that the Divine Vengeance shall think fit or just to inflict upon me; but if with all Sincerity and Uprightness of Intention I use my most diligent Endeavours in this whole Affair, I am on the other hand as well assur'd that more than this God neither does nor ever will *require* from me; for whatsoever is beyond my most sincere and diligent Endeavours, is to me, if not *naturally*, yet at least *morally impossible*, and whatsoever is either of these

these ways *impossible*, can never be the Matter of any of God's Commands, or, in other Terms, cannot be *required* by him, [§ XXI.]

XXVI. It will be objected, that, according to the Doctrine, an honest *Heathen* has as good a Title to Eternal Salvation as a *Christian*. I answer, not at all. If we suppose a Man (whether *Heathen* or *Turk*, whatever he is) to be thus truly sincere and diligent first in making all possible Enquiry into the Will of God, and then in fulfilling it as far as ever he comes to the Knowledge of it, it will follow from what I have said, that God neither will nor can *punish* him for not doing more, *i. e.* for not doing that which was *impossible*, and therefore neither was nor could be *required* from him, [§ XIII, XXI.] But on the other side, to entitle a Man to Salvation, which is a *Reward*, there must of necessity be either some *Merit* in the Person, or some *Promise* of God sufficient to ground this Title upon. As to the former of these, it is impossible, I think, in the very nature of the thing, for a Man to *merit* any thing from God, to whose free Bounty alone we entirely owe all that we are or have, whose Dominion over us is absolute, and without any Limitation, except from his own Mercy and Goodness, and to whose Happiness, or Well-being all Mankind, or even the whole Creation, cannot add so much as one single Grain. And, for the latter, what God in his infinite Mercy may do, is altogether a Secret to us; but there is no *Promise* of Salvation, that I know of, but through Faith in *Jesus Christ*, and Obedience to the Rules of the Gospel.

XXVII. Obedience to each Command of God as a way of Necessity is grounded upon, and presupposes an *Assent* given to all that Truth (whatever it may be) without which the Obedience itself is impracticable. For Example, It is commanded, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. Mat. xxii. 37.*

Th

This Com
sents to t
that he is
amiable,
manded,
Name of
Ghost, M
when I w
I am at A
tend to m
my part
ceived.
the Bein
and the I
Baptism.
Catalogu
they all
without
dience; t
plain De
my Assen
true or fa
Comman
that an E
in consec
more; a
contrary
are presu
necessari
that Exa
from eve
I take th
that is t
that I sh
to keep
may, as
receive
Th

This Command no Man can obey except he first assents to these Truths, *viz.* That *there is a God*, and that *he is endowed with such Attributes as render him amiable*, or a fit Object of our Love. It is also commanded, that all *Nations* should be *baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, Mat. xxviii. 19. And tho' I was thus baptized when I was an Infant, and had no Sense of it, yet now I am at Age, I take this Command still so far to extend to me, as to oblige me always to own, and on my part to ratify that same Baptism which I so received. But this I cannot do, except I first assent to the Being and Authority of the *Father*, and the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*, in whose Name I received my Baptism. And if we should run through the whole Catalogue of God's Commands, we should find that they all do thus presuppose some certain *Truths*, without an *Assent* to which there can be no *true Obedience*; that is to say, none that is agreeable to the plain Design of the Command. And altho' to give my Assent to, or withhold it from any Doctrine (how true or false soever) is *formally* no matter of a Divine Command, [§ XXII.] yet since it is most evident that an Error in one single Point of Speculation may, in consequence, be the unavoidable Cause of many more; and Errors in speculative Points, if they prove contrary to any of those Truths which, as I have said, are presupposed by any of God's Commands, must necessarily mislead the Person, who thus errs, from that Exactness of true Obedience, which is required from every Man as far as it comes within his Power. I take this to be a sufficient *Signification of God's Will*, that is to say, *a Command from him to me* [§ VIII.] that I should, always take the best Care I can, ever to keep my Mind in such a Disposition, as that it may, as much as is possible, reject all Errors, and receive no other Doctrine but what is true.

XXVIII. That there are *Degrees* of Strength a Man's Assent to any Truth, according to those his Apprehension of the Truth itself, and the Proof that are brought for it, I take to be undeniable. I give my Assent (for Example) to Truths of several kinds; some of them I can strictly demonstrate, and therefore can never entertain the least Doubt of them; for others I have a Concurrence of so many very probable Arguments, as amount to little less than a Demonstration; and, lastly, for others again I have sufficient Evidence, as gives me reasonable Satisfaction; but yet is not sufficient to secure my Mind against all Doubt that may possibly arise from some Objections that are brought on the contrary Side: The *Strength* therefore of my Assent to these several sorts of Truths, must, in consequence, be of different Degrees: And, in like manner, several Men according to the Difference of their Capacities, or of the Proof which they have received for one and the same Truth, may in very different Degrees give their Assent to it. Now the very lowest or weakest Degree of Assent (provided it really is an *Assent*) to any such Truth as I have been speaking of [§ XXVII.] is a rational Foundation for the Performance of any Duty, or Obedience to any Command of God, to which our Assent to such a Truth is as a Ground-work necessarily to be presupposed. If I own the Being of God, and his Attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, and all other his Perfections for which he ought to be loved; altho', for want of Capacity or sufficient Information, I do it but weakly and imperfectly, and not without a Mixture of Hesitation and Doubt, yet if I do it at all, and these things appear to me but a little more probable than their Contraries, the same way that the Scale turns in *Speculation*, it ought also to do in *Practice*; and upon this Foundation I may, and am bound to love God as he has commanded

commanded : And the like Conclusion may, in the like Case, be made upon all or any other of his Commands. But at the same time it is evident, that the *stronger* and *firmer* my Assent is to any such fundamental Truth, the more fixt and steddy my Obedience is like to be to any such Command as is built upon it. It appears therefore to me to be God's Will, and consequently I take it for another of his Commands, that, according to the best of my Capacity and Opportunities, I should always seek after the clearest and best Evidence that is to be had, for all such Truths as I can find to have an Influence on my *Duty* : For the better I am confirmed in my Assent to the former, the more steadfast, in all probability, I shall be in the Practice of the latter.

XXIX. My most sincere and diligent Endeavours, first, to know the Commands of God, together with the Truths which they presuppose, [§ XXVII.] and then to keep and observe them, being all that is within my Power, and therefore all that he can be supposed to *require*, and what he most certainly will *require* from me, [§ XXIV, XXV, &c.] it is altogether necessary that I should well consider, what is the true Nature of this *Sincerity* and *Diligence*, and wherein they consist. For if I am deceived in my Notions of these things, I may either fancy myself not to be *sincere* or *diligent*, when really I am so, and then I should be a continual Torment to myself ; or else I may perhaps think that I am *sincere* and *diligent*, when really I am not so, and thereby miss of that eternal Happiness which otherwise, through the Mercy and Goodness of God, I might attain unto. Now a Man's Endeavours are then only said to be *sincere*, when really and truly he *desires* to obtain and compass whatever in Appearance he pretends to strive for ; and *Diligence* altogether consists in *laying the speediest and surest Hold* he can upon every Opportunity that at any time presents

C

itself,

itself, or can be gained to that purpose: And whether I do thus, without any Dissimulation, *desire* both to know and keep the Commandments of God, and carefully *lay hold* on all such Opportunities as I can, in order to the compassing this my unfeigned Desire, plainly what I cannot be ignorant of or deceived in, I do but strictly examine, and put the Questions touching those Matters home to my own Conscience.

XXX. The Opportunities which different Men have of coming to the Knowledge of God's Commands, and of those Truths which must first in some degree be assented to, before our Obedience to them can be either rational or practicable [§ XXVII.] are very various, both as to their Kind and Degrees, according to the Capacity and other Circumstances of each particular Man; and that may be a great Opportunity to one, which is very little or none at all to another. For Example, a Book that is well and rationally writ in *the English Tongue*, may possibly afford much Instruction to me in these Matters, when at the same time it would be of no Advantage to others, who either cannot read, or are altogether ignorant of our Language; and but of very little to such as, tho' able to read *English*, yet may not have sufficient Capacity in many places fully to understand the Meaning of what is so written: And the like may be said of all other ways of attaining to this Knowledge; such as frequenting the Church, hearing of Sermons, going to School or to the University, the Study of Languages, Philosophy, History, or Arithmetic, and whatever else may any way conduce to the rendering of Men more learned or knowing in the things of Religion, which some Men have more of their Power than others to make use of; and some again have less Capacity than others to receive Benefit by. Here then it is, in the very first place, incumbent on every Man, who has the least Appre-

hension

omission of his Duty, or Sense of God's Authority, seriously to enquire and consider what Opportunities *he himself in particular* has of any way coming to the Knowledge of the Divine Commands, and of such necessary Truths, as must always be presupposed by him that gives Obedience to them. For if with all Diligence and Sincerity he makes the best use he can of these Opportunities, and afterwards in like manner reduces his Knowledge into Practice, he has then done the utmost that God requires from him, [§ XIII, XXI.] But if he be slack or negligent in the matter, or through any voluntary Omission of his own, remains in Ignorance of what he ought to do, he has no manner of Excuse to make for himself, nor can reasonably have any other Expectation, than to be condemned and severely punished for what he cannot deny to have been altogether his own Fault, [§ XXIV.]

XXXI. What and how many Opportunities Men of competent Learning may have of acquiring this Knowledge, of which I am now speaking, they are much better able to discern, each Man for himself, than I can pretend to be to tell them: But the generality of Mankind consisting of those whom we commonly call *unlearned*, who either cannot so much as read, or if they can, yet for want of the usual Means of farther improving their Understanding, have not a Capacity to apprehend any thing but what they either have been very much used to, or else is made exceedingly plain and easy; I shall place myself among the lower Rank of such sort of People, and supposing that I were now but beginning my Search after *everlasting Salvation*, I shall consider what Success I may well be supposed to have, if I honestly and diligently seek after the Way to it; or, in other terms, what *Opportunities* I in such Circumstances may have of finding out, what it is that God commands me

to do; my Obedience to such his Commands being all that is or can be required, in order thereunto from me, [§ III, IV.]

XXXII. If I take any Man, or Society of Men, or any Book for my Rule or Guide in this most important Affair, and conclude every thing to be a Command of God, that such *Man, Society, or Book* shall propose to me under that Notion, I must first and beforehand have some sufficient Argument to convince me of the Authority which they or any of them have to declare the Commands of God unto me: For without this Conviction, I have no way to distinguish between a false *Christ, Prophet, Church, or Revelation*, and a true one; and consequently can have no more Ground for the following of the latter than the former, or indeed of any of them at all, until some sufficient *Argument* is offered for the Proof of their Truth and Authority. Now this *Argument* must either be drawn from the Authority of some other *Man, Society, or Book*, which again will require the like Proof; and then we must for ever go back and, consequently, for want of a Beginning, can never make any Proof at all of what we intend; or else we must begin at some one or more Principles of Reason, of whose Truth we are sufficiently satisfied from their own Self-evidence, and without any other Proof than what their proper and native Light affords unto them. I find then an absolute Necessity of beginning my Search after God's Commands, and all those Truths that have any necessary relation to them, upon the Ground of such Principles as are clear and evident to my own Reason, except I should be so wild as to attempt to raise a Building without laying it upon any Foundation, [See § XV. XIX.] Only this I must never forget, through all the Enquiry that I am now about to make, viz. that altho' many times (it may be through some Defect

in my Understanding rather than in the Argument
 (itself) a Truth may not seem to me to be strictly *demonstrated* beyond all Doubt or Exception to the contrary; yet if, upon a most attentive and serious Consideration, it appears to have greater *Probability* on-ly than its contradictory, it is a sufficient and reasonable Ground for me to proceed upon, in the regulation of all my Actions, as far as it can be supposed that such a *Truth* (granting it to be really such) ought to have an Influence upon them, as I have already shewn [§ XXVIII.]

XXXIII. That some Truths then are, to every one who rightly apprehends them, fully evident by their own native Light, and without any other Demonstration or Proof, I take to be unquestionable. That all the Parts of any thing, taken together, are equal to the Whole, and that no one Part, how great soever, can be equal to it; that it is impossible for two Contradictories, at the same time and in the same respect, to be true; that every thing which begins to exist, must have some Cause of its Existence, and that where no Cause is, no Effect can be produced; these, I say, and many other such things, no Man in his Wits, who once understood the Meaning of the Words in which they are exprest, did ever yet deny, or, I believe, so much as doubt of, whatever some Men, whom they call *Scepticks*, may say or pretend. But if, by my Conversation among Mankind, I had not a little learnt how to frame my Thoughts and adapt Words to them, I very much doubt whether I should have had any clear and distinct Apprehension of *Equality*, *Cause*, *Effect*, or almost any other of the Notions or Ideas of Things; at leastwise so as to be able to join them together, in order to make up even the plainest Truths. The first Opportunity therefore which I find I have of knowing any Truth at all, and consequently those

particular Truths, on which my Knowledge of God's Commands and my Obedience to them do altogether depend, is that of conversing with other Men which may be done either by discoursing with them, or reading what they have written. If then I make the best Enquiry I am able from such Men as I can have recourse to, and I really judge best qualified to instruct me; if I carefully attend to what they say, and read or hearken to such Books as they recommend, at the same time not shutting my Ears against any thing that is offered by others, whoever they are, nor in the least endeavouring to bring myself to assent to or dissent from any thing, because this or that Man has said it, but only as, after an impartial Consideration, there appears to me to be just Reason to conclude it to be either true or false; if with Diligence and Sincerity I always proceed after this manner, as I shall then have made the best use I can of this Opportunity, so do I believe that God of his Goodness will either give such Success to my Endeavours, as that I shall come to a right Knowledge of his Commands, or else will pardon me if in any thing I am mistaken and know not how to help it. *Get wisdom, get understanding, Prov. iv. 5. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good, 1 Thess. v. 21. Try the Spirits, whether they are of God, 1 John iv. 1. Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? Luke xii. 57.* And all this according to the Ability and Opportunities which God in his Providence has given you, I take to be the loud and plain Voice of Reason as well as of Holy Scripture.

XXXIV. That there is a God most wise, good, and beneficent, as well as powerful, who is the Creator or first Cause of all other things, I have already concluded, [§ XVI, XVII.] And whatever Doubts or Perplexities my own Weakness or Melancholy, or the licentious Speeches of some atheistical Men may

may at any time raise in my Mind about this Matter, yet as long as this Doctrine appears to me to be more probable than the contrary, it commands a proportionable degree of Assent; and is a rational and sufficient Foundation for the Performance of all such Duties, as from thence may be inferred, [§ XXVIII.] The same Difference that there is between the Root, Spring, or Principle from whence any Property, Habit, Attribute, or Action proceeds, the same there must be between the Properties, Habits, Attributes, or Actions themselves; however, for want of sufficient Variety of Words, we are often forced to call them by the same Name. For Example, whatever a *Beast* does, it proceeds only from a bare *sensitive Instinct*; but *Man* acts by *Reason*, which we allow to be a Principle of a very different Sort. Altho' therefore, without any Solecism, we say, The Ox *knows* his Owner, *Isaiab* i. 3. The Spaniel *knows* and *loves* his Master (with such like Expressions) because we find in the Actions of those Creatures, as far as they are capable, the very same Effects that in Man are produced by, and proceed from the Principles of *Knowledge* and *Love*; yet we do not mean that the *Act* or *Habit* of *Knowledge* or *Love* in Man, *internally*, and *in itself alone* considered, is the same in *kind* and only differing in *Degree* from what we suppose to answer or correspond thereto in a *Beast*: For that would be in effect to conclude a *Beast* to be *rational* as well as a *Man*. Now as *Reason* in Man altogether differs from *sensitive Instinct* in a *Brute*, so is there a much greater Difference between that *simple Intuition* by which God acts, and that *rational Manner of Deduction* which is the Source of Human Actions. Altho' therefore, for want of more proper Words, we may be allowed to say of God, as we do of Man, that he is *wise*, that he *knows*, *decrees*, *loves*, *hates*, &c. yet for the Reason already given, we ought not

to imagine that *Wisdom, Knowledge, Decreeing, Love, Hatred, &c. internally, and in themselves*, as they are in *God*, are the same for *kind*, and only differing in *Degree* from what we suppose to answer or correspond thereto in *Man*, but only that the outward Effects of them, as far as they appear to us, are the very same; that is to say, we affirm of *God* that he is *wise*, because he does the very same things that it is evident a *wise Man* would do, supposing him to have Power, and that his *Wisdom* continuing for its *kind* to be still the same as now it is, had neither Limitation nor any other Imperfection. And in like manner we make use of other Words that primarily denote certain Habits or Qualifications in *Man*, to express the corresponding Attributes which, from the outward Effects, we undoubtedly conclude to be in *God*. But yet notwithstanding this *internal Difference* that is most certainly between the Attributes of *God* and the corresponding Qualities in *Man*; I have no other Rule to judge of the *outward Effects*, or Emanations of the former, but by Analogy and Proportion to the latter; and I must (for instance) conclude, that a *wise and good God* will always do whatever a *Man* infinitely wise and good (if I could suppose such a one to be) would do in the like Case: And after the same manner I must reason upon every Attribute of *God*, of which Multitudes of Examples might be given from the Holy Scriptures, where they speak of his *Justice, Mercy, Pity, &c.* if in so plain a Case there were any Necessity to produce them. Here then I have another Opportunity of learning what are the Commands of *God*. From the Works of the Creation I clearly infer not only the Being of *God*, but also many of his Attributes, [§ XVI, XVII.] And what my Reason thus teaches me, I find to be confirmed and farther improved in Holy Scripture; of the Authority whereof I am sufficiently

ficiently persuaded. [§ XVII, XVIII.] Let me then upon all occasions seriously and impartially consider what would a wise, just, good, and merciful *Man* command me to do, supposing he had the Power over me; and the very same I may conclude that God, who has all these Attributes in their utmost Perfection, does in every Case command me.

XXXV. Whilst what I have just now said in the preceding Section, is fresh in the Reader's Memory, I think it not improper to digress a little, and to make use of it to a farther Purpose. All who profess Christianity agree in this, that there is but one God alone; but the Controversy concerning a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature has been no small Disturbance to the Church. The Doctrine itself I take to be very evidently grounded upon the Holy Scripture, the Authority of which is on both Sides allowed; for the *Father*, the *Word* or *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* are there very often spoken of exactly in the same manner as we always speak of three several *Persons*; and of each of these Persons such Things are frequently said as cannot agree to any but *God*: Whereas all the Objections that are made against it are grounded upon this one palpable Mistake, that the Objectors always understand the Words *Person*, *Nature*, *Substance*, and all other the Terms made use of in this Dispute, in the very same Signification as we use those Words when we speak of Men like ourselves; for Example, *three Human Persons*, say they, *are three distinct Men*; therefore if they were really *three Divine Persons*, they must be *three distinct Gods*. Again, it is absurd, say they, to imagine that God, who is omnipresent, and supreme, and infinite in Power, can be *sent* by any one; but the Father is said to have *sent* the Son, and the Father and the Son are said to have *sent* the Holy Ghost; from whence they would infer, that
therefore.

therefore neither the Son nor the Holy Ghost is God with much more to the like purpose that frequently occurs in the Writings of the *Unitarians*. But let us see what Answer they themselves would or could give to an Argument or two in the like manner brought against some Doctrines which they maintain as well as we. For Instance, they as well as we teach that *God is most wise*, and that *he loves Mankind*, or at least all such of them as do not by their Wick- edness forfeit all Title to his Love. Let us now suppose that against these two Doctrines Arguments were framed after this manner. When we say of a Man that he is *wise*, we mean that he is one of great *Knowledge*, exact *Consideration*, and accurate *Contrivance* in all that he does: And when we say he *loves* his Friend, we mean that he is *tenderly affected* with whatever good or evil befalls him, and therefore endeavours what he can to procure the one and prevent the other. Now *Knowledge* in a Man is a *Reception* of those *Impressions* which are any way made upon his Mind by outward Objects; *Consideration* and *Contrivance*, properly speaking, are nothing else but a rational *Deduction of Consequences* one from another, and a due *Application* of them to any Business in Hand; and *Tenderness of Affection* necessarily supposes some degree of *Patibility* in the Person who is so affected. But can we say that God who existed, and had all his Attributes from Eternity, and before any thing existed besides himself; can we say of him that he *receives Impressions* from any Objects whatever, or that he did so before any such Object did outwardly exist? Can we say of him who acts by simple *Intuition*, that he first *deduces Consequences* and then *applies* them to any Business whatsoever? Or, lastly, can we say of him, who is perfectly impassible, that he is or can be *affected* with any thing? And if we can say none of these things of God; have

we

are not the very same Arguments against God's *Wisdom* and his *Love* to Mankind, as the *Unitarians* bring against the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead? And may we not after the same Manner argue against every Attribute and Action of God, which for want of more proper Words, we are forced to express in the very same Terms that we make use of in speaking of whatever corresponds thereto in Man? Here then a sober *Unitarian*, as well as every other Man, must, I think, have Recourse to the Principles just now laid down [§ XXXIV.] and say that as the *eternal* and *perfect* Nature of God is altogether of a different *kind* from the *created* and *imperfect* Nature of Man; so is there fully the same Difference between the Properties, Attributes, and Actions that exist in, or proceed from those two several Natures. By *Wisdom* and *Love* therefore, as they are *internally* in God, he does not mean the same things for *kind* as he does when he applies the same Words to Man; for the *imperfect* Nature of Man is by no means susceptible of the same *kind* of Properties or Attributes as exist in the perfect Nature of God; nor, consequently, is capable of performing the same *kind* of Actions. But by *Wisdom* and *Love* in God he means certain Attributes of the Divine Nature, which produce the same *outward Effects*, as far as appears to us, as would proceed from *Wisdom* and *Love* in Man; if we could suppose them to be absolutely perfect. Altho' therefore God is not wise with that *kind* or *sort* of Wisdom that Man is, nor loves with that *kind* or *sort* of Love that Man does; yet we truly and properly say that God is *wise* and that he *loves*, and we demonstratively prove these Truths from the *outward Effects* of both, altho' our weak Understanding cannot frame a Notion what the Divine Wisdom and Love *internally* and *in themselves* are, when at the same Time we are sensible that

that we enjoy the Benefit and Comfort of them both. This I take to be a rational and satisfactory Answer, and such as is to be made use of, whenever any Arguments are drawn from the bare Signification of any Words that are in common applied both to God and Man, or any other Creature. Let us then see whether this very Answer will not in the same manner clear up all the Difficulty that arises from such sort of Objections as those above mentioned, which are usually made against the Doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead: For when we say that there are *three Persons* in the Unity of the Divine Nature, we do not mean such kind of Persons as *three Men* are, any more than by *Wisdom, Knowledge, Love*, or any of the Attributes or Actions of God, we mean the same sort or kind of Qualifications or Actions, as we do when we apply the same Words to Man. But our Meaning (as well as in the sublime a Doctrine I am able to express it) is, that in the Divine Nature, which is but one (and that *numerically*, as the Schools speak) there is a threefold Distinction, *internally*, and *as it is in itself*, altogether incomprehensible to us; but *outwardly* in the Holy Scripture represented to us under the *personal* Names of the *Father*, the *Word* or *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* or *Spirit*; to each of whom we there find distinct *personal* Actions ascribed, and *personal* Expressions always accommodated. Altho' therefore it is beyond the Power of Human Understanding to conceive this Mystery *as it is in itself*; yet by Faith we believe it to be as God has *represented* it unto us, and this Representation we take to be a sufficient Foundation for all such Duties as are consequent upon or arise from the Doctrine: And because it is impossible to express our Meaning without the use of Words, nor will any Language furnish us with other Words to express the things of *God*, but such as are used to signify

signify what we apprehend to have the *nearest Correspondence* thereto in *Man*; for this Reason we are forced to make use of the Words *Person, Substance,* &c. not that they do denote unto us the things *as they are in themselves* (for in that respect we expressly own them to be *incomprehensible*) but only as they are analogically, and according to our Capacity, *represented* unto us by God in his Holy Word, as a Foundation for several Christian Duties. And when the *Son* or the *Holy Ghost* are said to be *sent* (which was the other Objection mentioned) by *sending* it is not intended that *Directions were given them to go from one place to another*, in the manner as one Man does to another, when he is said to *send* him; but to *send*, as it is thus applied to the *Father* or the *Son*, signifies an Act *in itself* indeed to us incomprehensible; but as near as may be in God, corresponding to the Action of *sending* in Man; and which, for want of a more proper Word, we are forced to express by the same Name. This I take to be a rational Answer to those two Objections of the *Unitarians* which I have above proposed, and sufficient to satisfy every Man who is content, with St. Paul, as long as he is in this Life, to *know* the Things of GOD *in part*, and to *prophecy* of them *in part*, and to *see* them *as through a Glass darkly*, or *in a Riddle*, as the Margin of our Bible renders it from the Greek, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. Nor is there any other Difficulty in the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as it is expressed either in the Holy Scripture, or in the Creeds or Liturgy of our Church, but what in the same manner may be fairly accounted for, altho' I must own that some of the Explications, which private and particular Men have given of this Doctrine, are not in my Opinion defensible: And if too many Men had not, in all Ages of the Church, been more fond of subtle Notions, and

Victory

Victory in speculative Disputations, than of promoting Peace and true Christian Piety, so many Controversies had not been multiplied, as have been about this and other Articles of our Religion; the many evil Consequences of which ought to stir up every good Man to have recourse to the only Remedy which in a rational Way, and such as is proper to Men, can ever be hoped to put an End to them. I mean first to fix and agree upon the *Notions of Things*, and the *proper, analogical, or metaphorical Signification of Words*, before they enter into such fierce Disputations about them.

XXXVI. I take this Way of accounting for the Attributes, Actions, and Persons of the Godhead, to be not only in itself very satisfactory; but also if rightly understood, of great Importance towards putting an End to all those Disputes that have arisen in the World about these matters; and if the Reader is not satisfied with what I have here said, I desire him, before he passes his Censure, to have recourse to the School Divines who have handled this Subject; particularly I recommend to him *Thom. Aquin. contra Gent. cum Com. Fran. de Silv. Lib. I. Cap. 32, 33, 34.* * where he will find these three Things expressly maintained; First that when we make use of the same Words in speaking of God, and of any other thing; such Words are not to be understood *univocally*, or in one and altogether the same Signification: The Nature or Essence of God not being of the *same kind* or sort with that of any other thing whatsoever. Secondly that yet such Words are not to be understood to be merely *equivocal*, or the same in *sound* only but without any manner of Agreement in their Sense or Signification.

* Nihil de Deo & aliis rebus *univocè* prædicatur. Ea quæ de Deo & aliis rebus prædicantur, non dicuntur purè *equivocè*. Quæ dicuntur de Deo & Creaturis, dicuntur *analogicè*.

For

For there may and ought to be an *Agreement*, tho' not an *univocal* one, in the Signification of every Word that is applied to God and any Creature; that is to say, when at any Time we speak of God in the same Words as we do of a Creature, the use of such Words ought not to be altogether groundless and precarious, but founded upon some just and sufficient Reason. Thirdly therefore that such Words are always to be understood *anologically*, that is to say with some reasonable and well grounded *Resemblance* of Signification in such their different Application: For since, in this Life, we have no *immediate* or sensible Knowledge of God, but only trace as much as we can of his Nature and Attributes, from those *Effects* which immediately incur into our Senses and Understanding, and of which we can demonstrate him to be the *Cause*; either we must have no Conception at all of such his Nature and Attributes; or else we must conceive them as well as we can (and in such a Manner as may be a sufficient Foundation for our Duty) from some faint and dark Resemblance, which we apprehend to be between them and those of some of his Creatures. Or if the Reader is not willing to trouble himself with the difficult Terms of the Schools; let him read *His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Dublin's* Sermon, entitled, *Divine Predestination and Fore-knowledge consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will*, where he will find this Matter very clearly and satisfactorily handled. I have indeed read two several Answers to this Sermon, but neither of them have had the least Influence upon me towards the Alteration of my Judgment or Opinion. One of them, without any direct Confutation of the Doctrine, endeavours to load it with many ill Consequences, which do not at all follow from it, if it be rightly understood; and the other most palpably mistakes the Doctrine itself.

And

And because his *Grace* teaches that *Wisdom, Foresight, Understanding, &c.* in *God* are things of another kind than what they are in *Man*; therefore the Answerer would put it upon him, as if he had in Effect said that *God* is not *wise*, neither *foresees* or *understands* at all, &c. which is plainly as far from his *Grace's* Meaning, as the thing in itself is both impious and ridiculous. But it is time to return from this Digression; which being of great Importance in itself, has almost insensibly run into a greater Length than I at first intended it.

XXXVII. To proceed then in the Way I was going: That *Christianity* has much the Advantage of all Religions, as in every other Respect, so particularly in that of the Probability of the Arguments which are brought to prove the Truth of it, of which I have just given a Hint [§ XVII.] and that these Arguments, joined with the internal Purity and Goodness of the Religion itself (I mean as it is genuine and unmixed) are sufficient to move a sober man to frame his Life according to it, and for so doing to expect his Reward hereafter: That the genuine Doctrines and Rules of Christianity are contained in the New Testament, and as much of the Old as is not abrogated and the Obligation thereof cancel'd; and that the Scope, Design, Sense, and Meaning of those Writings is still truly preserved both in the original Books and several Translations of them that are extant in the World [§ XVIII.] All this, I say, upon the most serious and attentive Enquiry I can make; appears to me to be much more credible than the contrary; and, consequently, is sufficient to determine my Choice, and in pursuance thereof ought to regulate my Practice [§ XXVIII.] Here then I have a farther Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of God's Commands; I am not debarred from reading, or hearing the Holy Scriptures read in my

OWN

own Mother Tongue ; and tho' many points of *Speculation*, and those of diverse Kinds, which there occur, are beyond the reach of my Comprehension; yet matters of *Practice*, or what I am *commanded* to do with respect to God, to myself, and to all Mankind, seems all along to be so plainly delivered, that it is hard for an unprejudiced Person to mistake the Meaning, at least of any of the great and important Rules of Duty which are therein contained: Or if at any time a Doubt or Difficulty arises in any Matter of Practice that I am not able of myself to clear up, I can easily have recourse to one or more sober and prudent Men, who, from Reason and other Passages of Scripture compared together, may help me to the Solution of it: Which Solution I may possibly very well understand, and sufficiently judge of when it is fairly offered me by another; altho' of myself, and without some such Help, I never should have been able to have found it out. And if after the sincere and diligent Use of these several Opportunities, which God in his good Providence has put into my Power, I yet remain in Ignorance or under a Mistake concerning any thing which he has commanded me to do; I have all the assurance that may be, that a wise and good God will never punish me for the want of that Knowledge, which it was at least *morally* impossible for me to attain unto. [§ XXI.]

XXXVIII. But some there are who tell me that the only certain Way of coming to the Knowledge of all Things that are necessary to my Eternal Salvation, is to have recourse to the *Church*, and to receive and follow whatever she teaches. With all my Heart! Let me but find the certain Way to *Heaven*; and it is altogether indifferent to me, from whom I am to learn it. But, if I act like a rational and conscientious Man, before I can do this which they would have me; I must have clear and full Sa-

D

tisfaction

tisfaction touching these three Things: First, how shall I be assured that God has commanded me to give myself up to the Guidance of any such Society of Men, who are called by this Denomination? For if he has not commanded it, it is certain that no Obligation can lie upon me to do it in order to my Salvation. [§ III.] Secondly, in the midst of all the Disputes that are about this Matter, how shall I be sufficiently informed who those Men are that *alone* do compose and constitute this *Church*, which is thus to be my *Guide*? For if I have not some *authentick Rule* whereby to know this, I may very innocently mistake one Society of Men for the *Church*, instead of another. And Thirdly, because it is impossible (and therefore not my Duty, § XIII) for me to apply myself to each particular Member of the *Church*; how shall I know who it is that has *unquestionable Authority* to propose the Dictates of the *Church* unto me, and also to explain them, if I do not sufficiently apprehend or understand them? And does he dwell within such a Distance from me, as that, upon all Occasions, I can possibly have recourse unto him? For it is manifestly as good for me to have *no Guide at all*, as not to have some sure and certain Way, that I may depend upon, of knowing and understanding *what the Directions are which my Guide gives me*. To these three Questions I have long been seeking for (not an artful, superficial, and plausible, but) a clear, solid, and satisfactory Answer, but never yet could meet with it from any of those Men, who yet would persuade me † *to live in an entire Submission to the Decisions of their Church, and not to inform myself of any other thing, save only to know what she*

† De vivre dans une entiere soumission aux decisions de l'Eglise, & de ne m'informer point d'autre chose que de sçavoir ce qu'elle nous enseigne, ne pouvant me tromper en l'ecoutant. Part. I. Instr. 6.

teaches

teaches us, as being impossible for me to be deceived
 while I hearken to her: As the Bishop of Viviers teach-
 es his *New Converts* to do, in the *Instructions* by his
 Order, and with authentick *Approbation* and *Privi-*
lege, published for them. But since my Eyes are of
 the same Texture and Use with those of all other
 Men, and G O D has been pleased to give the Light
 of the Sun to me as well as unto them; what ima-
 ginable Reason can there be why I should hoodwink
 myself, and blindfold follow any Number of Men
 whatsoever, without making the least Enquiry whe-
 ther the Way they intend to lead me is the safest and
 surest to that Place whither I am desirous to travel?
 Did our Blessed Saviour or his Apostles tell those to
 whom they preached, that thus they must believe
 and do, in order to their Salvation, because this was
 the Belief and Practice of the *Church*, and therefore
 to be embraced and followed without any farther
 Enquiry? Or would the Gospel, do we think, have
 ever made such a Progress in the World as in a few
 Years it did, if no better Reason than this had been
 given for it? On the contrary, they dealt with Men
 as with *Rational* Beings, they argued with them from
 the Principles of Reason, the Evidence of Miracles,
 and the Authority of the Old Testament, wherever
 it was received and owned, and always allowed and
 directed Men to examine the Strength of their Ar-
 guments, and accordingly to determine their Judg-
 ment. *If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me*
not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the
Works, John x. 37, 38. *Yea and why even of yourselves*
judge ye not what is right? Luke xii. 57. *Prove all*
Things; hold fast that which is good, 1 Thess. v. 21.
Believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they
are of God, 1 John iv. 1. *I speak as to wise men, judge*
ye what I say, 1 Cor. x. 15. *Be ready to give an An-*
swer to every man that asketh you a Reason of the

Hope that is in you, 1 Pet. iii. 15. These are the plain and fair Directions of the *Holy Scripture* as well as of sober *Reason*. But that a Man should never enquire into the Grounds of this or that particular Doctrine, *nor inform himself of any other thing save only to know what the Church teaches*, and then to believe and receive it all wholly and solely upon her bare Authority, has not the least Countenance from either. When the Men of *Berea searched the Scriptures whether those things which St. Paul preached were so*, Act. xvii. 11. did he disapprove of what they did, or tell them they took a wrong Method? And when *Felix sent for him and heard him concerning the Faith in Christ*, Act. xxiv. 24. Had he told him that now there was a Christian Church planted, all that he had to do was to inform himself what were the Doctrines therein received and approved, and then to embrace all such Doctrines without any farther Enquiry, the Governor would certainly have despised him, and had much more Reason to have thought him *besides himself* than his Successor *Festus* had, Ch. xxvi. 24. But the great Apostle took a very different Method: The Text tells us *he reasoned with him*, and when, amongst other things, he came after this convincing Manner to press the Duties of *Righteousness* and *Temperance* and the Doctrine of a *Judgment to come* home upon his Conscience, it for the present at least, awakened him and made him *tremble*, Ch. xxiv. 25. But enough of this Controversy, and indeed I think more than enough in so very plain a Case. Upon the whole then I conclude (and that, as I think, very reasonably from all that has been said) that as the very best and utmost I can do, in order come to a true and satisfactory Knowledge of the Commands of God, is to seek for the best Information therein that I can get from the Light of my own Reason, from the Holy Scriptures, and other

other Books that I am capable of having recourse to, and from the Conversation of such Men as I have most Reason to believe can best inform me, and will not deceive me; so, if according to my Capacity, I do all this with constant *Diligence* and unfeigned *Sincerity*, and without any Byass upon my Mind or Understanding either from my own Lusts, Passions, or Inclinations, or from any thing that is external to me, such as the Honours or Profits of this World, or the gratifying of this or that Man or Party of Men; and if, as far as I can discover what the Commands of God are, I honestly and carefully put them in Practice, and make them the constant and unalterable Rule of all my Actions, I have done all that lies in my Power to do in this matter; and, consequently, all that a wise and good God can possibly be supposed to require from me [§ XIII. XXI.] and if after all the above enquiry, I prove to be mistaken touching any one or more of God's Commands, how far I may yet assure myself of a *Reward* for my Sincerity I pretend not to know: But this I can depend upon, that He who of his own Free Will created me, will never *punish* me for not doing a Thing, whatever it is, that appears to be beyond my Ability to do. [§ XXVI.]

XXXIX. After many anxious and disquieting Thoughts, in the Time of my Youth, concerning my Everlasting Salvation, having at last, through the Blessing of God, with great Comfort and Satisfaction, settled my Mind in Ease upon the Principles of which I have hitherto been giving an Account; about twenty Years ago I ventured to publish to the World a brief and plain Account of the Success I had met with in my Search after true Religion, and therein first of the *Doctrines* which are the main Foundations or Springs of Duty [§ XXVII.] and then of the *Laws* or *Commands* of God, which are the Rule of it, in
a little

a little Book to which I gave the Title of *A Gentleman's Religion*, consisting of three Parts and an *Appendix*: And some Years after I made another, and much shorter Draught of the same Things for Substance, designed for the Information of the meanest Capacities, and called it *An Essay towards making the Knowledge of Religion easy*. If any man therefore, after reading these Papers, shall think it worth his while to know more of my poor Thoughts touching such Things as are of the greatest and even eternal Importance to us all, I refer him to those two little Books, only desiring him, first, candidly to interpret, and supply the Defect of all such Expressions as there he shall find to want that due *Exactness*, which even at this Time I am far from pretending to be Master of; and then that he would carefully examine all that I have delivered by the Rule of his own Reason, and that of the Holy Scriptures. But because there are some Difficulties, which (if I had then sufficiently thought of them) I ought in the former of the two Books mentioned to have proposed and answered, I will now, before I make an end, seriously and impartially consider what return ought to be made to them.

XL. In the first place then: The *Assent* which Men give to the Truth of any Doctrines or Propositions, from the different Grounds upon which it is, or may be given, takes unto itself three several Denominations. When a Truth is either so clear by its own Light, or so evidently follows from some other Truth that is so, as not to admit of the least Possibility of a Doubt, the Assent which I give to such a Truth as this, we call *Science* or *Knowledge*: When the Evidence which I have for a Truth is only *probable*, that is to say, leaves some Room (tho' but little) for a Doubt, my Assent to such a Truth is what we usually style *Opinion*: And lastly, when

my Assent
simony of
by the na
distinguis
the Differ
gives his
inction,
very often
ly put the
God is;
that he is
are Truth
strable fro
Reason, a
and the A
Faith, He
we give o
the necess
which are
sufficient
in all Cas
sary Act
quently (f
a Divine
the first D
ing of tho
Faith or A
God, I
those tha
Mar. xvi.
XLI. I
Significati
flexible N
man Agre
Consequ
gy is upon
ed, in the

my Assent is grounded purely and only upon the Testimony of another, this is what we properly term by the name of *Belief*, or *Faith*, which is commonly distinguished into *Divine* and *Human*, according to the Difference of the Testimony upon which a Man gives his Assent. And yet, notwithstanding this Distinction, these Terms are, in common Discourse, very often used in a greater Latitude, and frequently put the one for the other: For Example; that God is; that *the Worlds were framed by him*; and that *he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, are Truths which to me appear to be strictly demonstrable from the plainest Principles of self-evident Reason, and yet we are said to *believe* these Things, and the Assent which we give unto them, is called *Faith*, Heb. xi. 3, 6. And upon what ground soever we give our Assent unto the several Truths which are the necessary Foundation of those respective Duties which are to be built upon them, [§ XXVII.] it is sufficient to denominate us *true Believers*. But since, in all Cases whatsoever, *Assent* or *Dissent* is a necessary Act of the human Understanding; and consequently (formally taken) can never be the Matter of a Divine Command (as I have observed, § XXII.) the first Difficulty will be to shew what is the meaning of those Passages of Holy Scripture which require *Faith* or *Belief*, as a *Duty commanded* and *required by God*, 1 Joh. iii. 23. or threaten Punishment to those that want it, as being guilty of a Crime, Mar. xvi. 16.

XLI. I answer, that since all *Speech* derives its Signification not from any natural, unalterable, or inflexible Necessity, but wholly and entirely from human Agreement, Custom, and Imposition, the plain Consequence is, that whatever Latitude or Analogy is upon any occasion generally allowed or received, in the Interpretation of any Words or Schemes of

of

of Expression; must so far always be taken into the Construction of Holy Scripture, as that it may never be irreconcilable with the plain, evident, and allowed Dictates of Reason; nor ought we to charge even mere *human* Writings (and much less those of the *sacred Pen-men*) with Contradictions or Absurdities, if by a fair and candid Interpretation of the Words, they may, according to any usual or allowed way of speaking, be brought to admit of another Meaning. Now altho' to assent to the Truth of any thing, without sufficient Evidence for it, or to dissent where I have such Evidence, is altogether out of my Power, and consequently can never be the Matter of a Divine Command; yet since the keeping of my Mind in a *due Disposition* for the *impartial Consideration* of such Evidence as is offered me, and the *diligent Application* of myself to such Consideration, is no more than what does, or may in many Cases, entirely depend upon the Freedom of my own Will; and upon the Supposition of such a Disposition and Application, assent to a Truth for which such Evidence is offered must of Necessity follow, [§ XXII.] even the very *Act of Assent* may in the common way of Speech be called a *Duty*, whenever it is a necessary Consequence from any other thing that is so. It being then most evidently my Duty always to keep my Mind in a right Disposition for the Reception of Truth, [§ XXVII.] and to be diligent in my Enquiry after all such Truths as may help me to find out the Commands of God, [§ XXIV, XXV.] wherever God has given me *sufficient Evidence* of any such Truth, if I do not give my Assent unto it, I am certainly guilty of a Sin: But then the Sin itself lies not properly in my *want of Assent* (which is a thing not within the Compass of my Power, § XXII.) but in the want of that *due Disposition and Application of Mind*, which

if I had
my Assent
afforded
in my Po
them ope
But supp
sufficient
in the wa
good Lig
is not a
voidable
I need n

XLII.

sitting Di
with it;
opportunit
it; wher
vidence is
it, I must
cannot bu
open Lig
stance, w
it: And
the Know
mands of
follow fr
and Sinc
thereunto
within-m
be suppor
arises a fe
ful for an
explicit A
Thirdly,
Degree o
my maki
demande

if I had taken right Care to preserve and maintain my Assent, upon such Evidence as I suppose to be afforded me, must of Necessity have followed. It is in my Power either to shut my Eyes, or to keep them open, and to turn them to or from an Object: But supposing my Eyes to be open, and otherwise sufficiently well disposed, and no Obstruction to be in the way, to see or not to see a proper Object in a good Light and at a competent Distance before them, is not a thing of Choice, but of absolute and unavoidable Necessity. The Application is so easy that I need not make it.

XLII. If therefore I always keep my Mind in a sitting Disposition to receive *Truth*, wherever I meet with it; and if, according to my Capacity and Opportunities, I am sincerely diligent in the Search of it; whenever God in the Course of his good Providence is pleased to offer me sufficient Evidence for it, I must as unavoidably give my Assent to it, as I cannot but *see* an Object of Sight, that in a clear and open Light is placed before me within a due Distance, when my Eyes are open, and turned towards it: And if from all such Truths as I come thus to the Knowledge of, I impartially infer all the Commands of God, or Rules of Duty, that I can find to follow from them, and, with my utmost Diligence and Sincerity, do constantly conform my Practice thereunto; I have then done all that in this Case lies within my Power, and consequently all that God can be supposed to require from me. [§ XXI.] But here arises a second Difficulty, namely, How far it is lawful for any *Church* to require from me an *absolute and explicit Assent* to any, and what Doctrines? And, Thirdly, If any such Assent may be required, What Degree of it [§ XXVIII.] is sufficient, in order to my making such a Profession thereof as is usually demanded?

XLIII. For a clear and satisfactory Answer to the second Difficulty, I lay down the following *Conclusions*. First, *If any Church shall positively pronounce Damnation against any Person, barely for not believing or assenting to any Doctrine whatsoever, without making any Allowance either for his want of Evidence, or of Capacity to apprehend it, such a Church I take to be in a very plain and palpable Error.* How far such an Assent may be reckoned a *Duty*, I think I have sufficiently explained [§ XLI.] And whosoever pronounces Damnation upon the want of any thing beyond what is so, most certainly passes a Sentence, which God will never ratify. Secondly, Since the very Notion of a *Church* consists in this, that it is a *Society* joined together under a *religious Government or Ministry*, and maintaining *Communion* among themselves, in order to everlasting Salvation; *the very utmost to which the Power of any Church* (Universal or Particular) *can be supposed in this Case to extend, is to require an explicit Assent to some certain Doctrines as a Condition* (not absolutely of *Salvation*, which to grant or withhold is only in the Power of God, but) *of Communion, or of being admitted to a Share in its Government or Ministry*: Nor ought any Church, in Reason, to say or mean more upon this Occasion than thus, *viz.* You shall not be owned as a Member of our Communion, except, amongst other things, you expressly profess your Belief of such certain Truths, which we commonly call *Articles of Faith*; nor shall you be admitted to the Ministry, or to any Share in Church Government amongst us, except you in like manner give your Assent to certain other Doctrines, which we commonly call *Articles of Peace*: But if you cannot give your Assent to these Truths or Doctrines, and thereby are excluded from the Ministry, or any part in our Church Government, or even from our Communion itself, what Allow-

ance

ance God
for your
what he
ly, That
to which
Communi
who has
For Exam
Reward
which he
tainly ne
bodied t
that ever
may be s
to every
we woul
we may k
quire an
mon, or
government.

XLIV
needs be p
tion of th
mands, in
as this m
every one
§ XXVII
yet if our
consistent
his Assent
such Refu
very Des
eternal Sa
be necessa
Comman
no more)
as is nece

ance God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, will make for your want either of Capacity or Evidence, is what he himself alone is able to determine. *Thirdly*, That *there are some Doctrines, without an Assent to which a Man ought not to be admitted even into the Communion of any Church whatsoever, is what no Man, who has any Sense of Religion, will offer to gainsay.* For Example, That *there is a God, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* are Truths, which he that should refuse to assent to, would certainly never gain admittance into any Society embodied together in the Profession of any Religion that ever was or can be in the World: And the same may be said of divers other Doctrines with relation to every Church that professes *Christianity*. But if we would have some fit and settled Rule whereby we may know to what Doctrines a Church may require an Assent as a Condition of her bare Communion, or farther, of a Share in her Ministry or Government, I farther answer,

XLIV. First, *Where our Assent to any Truth must needs be presupposed unto, and is the necessary Foundation of that Obedience which we owe unto God's Commands, in order to our eternal Salvation, such an Assent as this may explicitly be required by any Church from every one whom she admits into her Communion.* [See §XXVII.] And however true any Doctrine may be, yet if our Ignorance of it or Dissent from it is not inconsistent with such Obedience, he that refuses to give his Assent to such a Doctrine, ought not, on account of such Refusal, to be rejected or excluded. For since the very Design of Church Communion is in order to eternal Salvation [§XLIII.] and nothing is or can be necessary to Salvation but only Obedience to God's Commands [§III.] it follows, that so much (and no more) may be required unto Church Communion, as is necessary in order to such Obedience; meaning

by Obedience a Conformity of Life and Actions unto that *ordinary* Rule of God's Will, which he has been pleased to make known unto us. Secondly, *It may be lawful, and in many Cases is highly convenient, to require from those who are admitted into the Ministry, or any Share of the Government of the Church, an Assent to more Doctrines than what ought to be required only as a Condition of Communion.* By Church Communion alone a Man partakes of the ordinary Means which God has appointed to Salvation (such as Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and joint Prayer and Worship with the Congregation) from which Means therefore no Man ought, either in Charity or Justice, to be excluded, if he be duly qualified for them: But the Offices of the *Ministry* and *Church Government* are appointed as Means, not of *Salvation* to those who exercise them, but of *Edification* to the rest of the People: For which Edification if sufficient Provision be made, or as good Provision as the Circumstances of things will admit of, it is neither unjust nor uncharitable for those who are in Authority, to prescribe any Terms, that are not in themselves unlawful, and may any way conduce to the Peace or other Benefit of the Church, as Conditions, without a Compliance with which no Man shall be allowed to exercise or take any such Office upon him: And upon this very reasonable Principle a Church may, amongst other things, require an Assent to more Doctrines than what are thought necessary to Salvation, from all such as She admits to be either Ministers or Church Governors within her Community.

XLV. But then it will be asked (especially considering the Obscurity, in which some Doctrines professed by divers Churches are involved) what *Degree* of Assent is necessary [See § XXVIII.] for the making of such a Profession, as our Church in both the Cases just now mentioned always requires? This

was the third Difficulty proposed at the end of §XLII. to which I come now to give a clear and distinct Answer. In order whereunto I take it for granted, that where no Assent is inwardly given, none ought to be outwardly professed; and that he who has no manner of Notion of the Meaning of a Doctrine, cannot possibly give his Assent to it: Upon which I lay down this as my first Conclusion, *viz.* That *no Man ought to profess an Assent to any Doctrine, until he has some Notion of the Meaning of it.* Let us suppose that the Twelve Apostles were now alive, and that they should propose a Doctrine in a Language which I do not at all understand; I might indeed in this Case, and I should *assent to their Veracity*, and believe that whatever Doctrine they should propose were most certainly true; but for me to give a *direct Assent to the Doctrine itself*, would be impossible. For thus to assent to a Doctrine, is neither more nor less than to *acknowledge the Truth of it*: And in the very Notion of acknowledging the Truth of a Proposition, *some Apprehension*, at least, of the *Meaning* of it is of Necessity implied: And therefore before I can lawfully profess my Assent to any Doctrine, I must in some degree understand the Sense and Purport of it.

XLVI. Whether a Doctrine be true or false, there are *Degrees of Apprehension*, even barely with respect to the *Meaning* of it. For Example, A Man of a clear and good Sight distinctly *understands* all that you say about Light and Colours: He, whose Eyes have, from his Infancy, been *very dim*, will in proportion to his Sight, have a less perfect and more confused Notion of your Discourse: But if a Man has been perfectly *blind from his Birth*, altho' it be impossible for him, for want of a proper Faculty, to have an *immediate or direct Idea* of any of the Objects or Instruments of Sight; yet by way of *Analogy, Similitude, or Comparison*, he so far may have an Appre-

hension of them, as to be fully convinced that all that is said about this Matter, is not a multitude of Words without any Signification at all, but really and truly has a *Meaning*; altho' he neither has nor can have any Conception of it, save what is begotten in him by the means of some other of his Senses, representing something unto him that bears some sort of proportion to those things, which, for want of his having proper Organs, can find no *direct* Entrance or Admittance into his Understanding: Of which I have given a more full Account in the *Appendix to a Gentleman's Religion*: And that there are also *Degrees of Assent*, with respect to the *Truth* of a Doctrine, in proportion to those both of Apprehension and Proof, I have already shewn § XXVIII. The second Conclusion then, which I lay down for the clearing up of this third Difficulty, is, that as *the lowest or weakest Degree of Assent to any Truth* is a rational Foundation for the Regulation of my Actions in conformity to it (as I have shewn § XXVIII.) so is it *sufficient to warrant my open Profession of it, whenever I am thereunto lawfully required*; and that for the like Reason as I have there given.

XLVII. Let us then suppose that the Question were put to one of a mean Capacity, whether he believes *the Resurrection of the Body*? it may be he has but a very *obscure Notion of the meaning of a Resurrection*, or what that Body is that shall arise, and of what Parts or Particles it shall consist. Again, when he considers the common Objections that have been made against this Doctrine, and particularly that of one human Body's Passage, through divers Changes, at last into the Nourishment of another; perhaps he is not without some *Doubt or Hesitation* in his Mind, even touching the *Possibility* of it. But on the other hand, when he calls to mind that the infinite Power of God is not to be measured by his scant Reason or Apprehension,

benfion, and remembers how exprefly the Refurre-
 ction of the Body is asserted in the Holy Scriptures
 (of whose Authority we fuppose him to be fufficient-
 ly convinced, § XVIII.) altho' he is not able altoge-
 ther to clear up that Mift of Doubt and Obscurity
 which had taken Poffeffion of his Mind; yet finding
 the Arguments for a Refurrection to have a greater
 Influence upon him than the Objections which are
 brought againft it, his Affent inclines that way
 (altho', after all, perhaps it is but weakly and faint-
 ly) and for this Reason I fay that fuch a Man, upon
 all proper Occafions, may and ought to make an o-
 pen Profeflion of this, as well as of any other Arti-
 cle of the Christian Faith. But you will fay, is fuch
 a weak and faint Affent as this fufficient to warrant a
 Man's faying, *All this I ftedfaftly believe*, which is the
 Form of Profeflion that the Church requires? I an-
 fwer, that *Stedfaftnefs* of Belief does not confift in
 the *Strength of that speculative Affent* which a Man
 gives to any Doctrine (which, properly fpeaking,
 is not within his Power, § XXII.) but altogether in
 that *Firmnefs of Purpose and Refolution*, which he forms
 within himfelf, of leading his Life in Conformity to
 it. Let us fuppose (for Example) that a Man is not
 free from fome Doubts even concerning the Truth
 of Christianity, but yet, at the fame time, with a
 moft fixt and fettled Purpose of Heart, leads his
 Life in the very fame manner as he would and ought
 to do, if his Perfuaſion concerning its Truth were
 as lively and ftrong as any Man is or can be capable
 of entertaining; fuch a Man as this, notwithftand-
 ing his Doubts in *Speculation*, yet in the *practical* Senfe
 of the Expression, is a *ftedfaft Believer*, and *holds faft*
the Profefſion of his Faith without wavering, Heb. x.
 23. For true *faving Faith* is not to be meafured by
 its intrinfick *Firmnefs* (which, properly fpeaking,
 is rather a *Comfort* or a *Reward* than a *Duty*) but al-

together by its *Fruitfulness* in holy Desires and good Works: Nor is this only agreeable to the main Tenour and Purport of the *New Testament*, but to the clearest and plainest *Reason* also; which abundantly assures us, that a wise and good God will never require that, as a Condition of Salvation *on our part to be performed*, which most manifestly is beyond the Verge of our Power.

XLVIII. As far as a Man is at liberty to make Profession of his Faith and Religion in Words of his *own choosing*, he ought always to express his Thoughts in the *clearest* and most *determinate* manner that he can. For no other Reason can be imagined, why a Man should *make Choice* of such Expressions as are doubtful, rather than those that are plain; except it be that he desires (by some at least) to be understood after a different manner from what he privately means within himself; which sort of Collusion or Dissimulation, as it is not easily justifiable in any Case whatsoever, so in Matters of *Religion* is it altogether wicked and abominable. But where a *certain Form of Words*, containing one or more Doctrines of Religion, is *already settled* and established, and a Man is required, out of Peace and Unity, or in Obedience to lawful Authority, to profess his Assent thereunto, and that without imposing upon, or requiring from him any manner of Comment or Explication; if there be no Sentence or Expression in that Form, but what is fairly capable of such an Interpretation as is in itself true, I see no reason why any honest Man, having this Apprehension of the Matter, may not subscribe or profess his Assent to it; provided, that if at any time he be lawfully called upon to explain the manner, in which he understands what he has thus subscribed or given his Assent unto, he do it clearly and explicitly, and, as much as lies in his Power, without any Ambiguity or

or Obscurity. For if the Words of such a Form are *doubtful*, why must I be obliged to understand them in such a Sense as contains *false* Doctrine, if they are fairly reconcileable to that which is true? Or if they are very *general* or of great *Latitude*, what Necessity is there why I should *restrain* or *limit* them at all, since the Authority which imposed them, has not thought fit either to give or require any Explication or Limitation of them, beyond what is contained in the Words themselves? And in order to lessen the Number of *unnecessary Controversies* in the Christian World, I wish it were seriously laid to heart, *First*, That very often the Dispute is not, *What has God commanded us to believe or do* (which yet is all that is necessary to Salvation, § IV.) but only, *Is this particular Doctrine true or not?* the Determination whereof may be of very little or no Concern perhaps to any Man, who by his Religion aims at nothing but the Favour of God and everlasting Happiness. Nor, *Secondly*, Whether *such or such a Doctrine*, as it is nakedly delivered by the Church, but as it is clothed with this or that Interpretation, Limitation, or Extension, *be true?* And yet if, for Peace sake, or in Obedience to Authority, I profess my Assent to any Doctrine of the Church; as I ought thereby to mean all that the Church has *expressed*, so is it most unreasonable to expect any more from me. For if the Church had required more, why should she not plainly tell me so? And where she has made no Declaration of her Meaning, how is it possible for me to know it? You will say perhaps that the Sense of the Generality of Men, eminent for Learning and Knowledge in every Church, is to be look'd upon as the Sense of the Church itself: But besides that, there is a great Difference between the Sense even of *every* particular Man *apart*, or in his *private Capacity*, and that of the *whole Society collectively*, either in itself, or by its
 legal

legal Representatives, and that, in the midst of those various Explications of speculative Doctrines, which often are advanced by learned Men even of the same Church, it is not easy (especially for a Man of little Learning) to determine what, in controverted Points, is the Sense of the *generality* of such eminent Men; it is sufficient to me that the Church does not require my Assent to this same Sense, in case I were able to find it out and determine it (for if she had required any such thing, she ought to have said so, which she has not done) but only to those *particular Doctrines* which she has expressly established, and that in the very same (and none other) Words as she has delivered them, however *general* or *comprehensive* they may appear to be. And if the Reader will but duly consider this, and at the same time take notice of the Account which [§ XXXV.] I have given of the Word *Person*; and also remember that the Word *Necessary* very often imports not an absolute and indispensable Necessity, but only denotes that such a thing is a † *Duty*, and that the *Act of Assent* can be no farther a Duty than as I have explained it [§ XLI.] as also that these Expressions [*to keep the Faith whole and undefiled, and to believe faithfully*] do carry no more in them than what (§ XLVII.) I have shewn to be the Meaning of *stedfastly to believe*; if (I say) he sufficiently considers all this, and has a greater Love for Peace and Unity than for Disputation and Contention, he will make no difficulty of subscribing or saying *Amen* to that *Creed* which commonly goes under the Name of *St. Athanasius*: And as for our *Thirty Nine Articles*, let every Sentence in them be taken in that *Generality* and *Latitude*, with which they who composed them were content (for

† Note, that what in the *Athanasian Creed* we translate, Before all things it is necessary, in the Greek. is *πρὸ πάντων χρει.*

the Sati
express
Man to
Nor the
Man, w
Temper
such an
from all

FOR
I h
think it
ing Par
Words
terwov
either
eviden
in orde
mean a
is requ

Hov
but the
self a
say, n
are al
or of
who d
it, is
Thoug

the Satisfaction of opposite contending Parties) to express themselves; and I may safely challenge any Man to find a false Proposition in any one of them: Nor therefore can I see the least Reason, why any Man, who is rightly informed, and of a peaceable Temper, should refuse by his Subscription to give such an Assent to them, as our Church requires from all who are admitted to Holy Orders.

A P P E N D I X.

FOR the more satisfactory clearing up of what I have said touching St. *Athanasius's* Creed, I think it not improper to give the Reader the following Paraphrase of it, in which I have retain'd all the Words of the Creed itself, and have therewith interwoven such things as (in my Apprehension) are either presuppos'd by, contain'd or imply'd in, or evidently consistent with it, and necessary or useful, in order to the clear and full understanding of it, I mean as far as we are capable, and the Belief of it is requir'd either by God or any Christian Church.

The PARAPHRASE.

How far God (whose Authority has no Limits but those of his own Attributes) has reserv'd to himself a Power either of barely pardoning (that is to say, not punishing) such Ignorance and Errors as are altogether (or in a great measure) involuntary, or of rewarding the sincere Endeavours of those who diligently seek after Truth, and yet miss of it, is none of my Intention at present to give my Thoughts: But whereas in his infinite Wisdom he

has

has thought fit in his Gospel to reveal and make known unto us a sure and certain Way to eternal Salvation; *Whosoever*, according to this Way or Method thus made known unto us, *will be eternally saved*, in the first place, and *before all other things*, it is incumbent on him and *necessary* that he so embrace and hold that Faith which was once deliver'd unto the Saints, *Jude 3.* which we commonly call *the Catholick* or universal Faith (because it was every where universally preach'd and taught to all Christian Churches) as that it may be a sufficient Foundation for the Performance of all those Duties, which God by the same Gospel requires from him.

Which Faith except every one, to whom it is sufficiently propos'd or preach'd, *do*, according to his Capacity, embrace, and also *keep whole and undefiled*, without knowingly or carelessly giving way to any Doctrines or Practices that are contrary to, or destructive of it, he is guilty of great Sin, and (if he does not timely repent) *without doubt he shall be condemn'd by God, and perish everlastingly.*

And whereas no Doctrine is more plainly taught in the Gospel (as well as in the Law and the Prophets) than that there is but one God alone, and yet such things are as plainly said of the Father, the Son (or Word, as he is also call'd) and the Holy Ghost, as cannot agree to any but God only; I am perswaded that the fundamental Principle of *the Catholick Faith* is this, *that we so believe these things*, as that they may have a due Influence on our Practice; and as by our being Christians we dedicate ourselves to the Service of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; so should we accordingly *worship one God in Trinity, and this Trinity in Unity.*

Neither

Neither
of the Fa
there we
whom so
Scripture
speak of
our Tou
be in Go
the Divin
one Subj
For all
city of M
the thin
only in
ones of
ly, v. 1
not only
tween th
made as
Expressi
just now
often sp
always f
fore, b
express
any Wo
self) I
that th
the Son,
not her
Ghost
as Thre
sons; a
fess th
between
Three
the afo

Neither confounding the Notion which we have of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as if there were no real Distinction between them, whom so often we find to be spoken of in Holy Scripture in the very same Language as we always speak of *Three distinct Persons*; nor yet dividing in our Thoughts that Unity which we are taught to be in God, so as to apprehend or imagine that in the Divine Nature there is or can be more than one *Substance* or Spirit.

For altho' it is impossible for the limited Capacity of Man to have full and adequate Notions of the things belonging unto God, which we know only in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. or clear and plain ones of what we only see as through a Glass darkly, v. 12. or in a Riddle (*Marg.*) yet that there is not only a nominal, but a real Distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is made as plain as well may be from the frequent Expressions of the Holy Scripture, which I have just now hinted at, wherein these Three are so often spoken of in the very same manner as we always speak of *Three distinct Persons*; and therefore, because I cannot find more proper Words to express my Thoughts of this Distinction (not can any Words, I think, fully express it as it is in itself) I choose to do it as well as I can by saying, that *there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost*. But I do not hereby mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are Three Persons after the same manner as Three Men or Three Angels are Three Persons; all that I intend is to acknowledge and profess that real Distinction which I believe to be between them, which comes nearer to that of Three Human or Angelical Persons (according to the aforesaid Expressions of Scripture) than any other

other Representation that I can make, or that I find to be made of it; and however imperfect (for want of sufficient Capacity or Information) my Apprehension of this Distinction may be, yet if I so believe it, as in Consequence thereof to *worship one GOD in Trinity, and this Trinity* (to whom by my Baptism I have dedicated myself) *in Unity*, my Faith in this Point is sufficient to my everlasting Salvation.

But whilst I am thus setting forth, as well as I am able, this Trinity of Persons, I think it necessary to profess, that all this is to be understood in such a manner (and none other) as to be perfectly and fully consistent with the Unity of God; for there neither is nor can be more than one God; and therefore I also expressly say, as I truly believe, that *the Divine Nature, or Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one* and the very same, and consequently *the Glory equal and the Majesty co-eternal.*

If any one shall demand how this can be? Or what Possibility is there, that one and the same Being should yet be Three? I can only say, that when God shall be pleased to enlarge my Faculties (as he certainly will do if I arrive to the Life of the Blessed in the World to come) when my present Knowledge, which is but in part, shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come in its room, *1 Cor. xiii. 10.* when I shall be blessed with seeing God as he is, *1 John iii. 2.* or Face to Face, and knowing him in some manner as I am also known of him, *1 Cor. xiii. 12.* then shall my Faith be turn'd into Knowledge, and what I now only believe upon the bare Testimony of God's Word, I shall then have a clear and distinct Apprehension of; but in the mean time for me to take upon me to offer any Explication of this Mystery,

tery, whereby to make it as clear in itself to the Reason and Understanding of Man, as it is, or ought to be, in its Credibility to his Faith upon the Authority of God, would be much the same as if a Man who never had Eyes, and yet believes something of Light and Colours from the many Discourses and analogical Representations which he has had of them from his honest Neighbours, should take upon him to write a Discourse of Opticks. And as the same Demand may perhaps several times be made upon occasion of what I am farther about to say touching the Profession of my Faith, so I desire that (once for all) the Answer which I have now given may be suppos'd to be return'd to it: My Design is only to declare what I believe, either upon the express Testimony of Holy Scripture, or such evident Consequences from it, as I think no considering Man can avoid; but to explain any thing that is no Object either of my Sense or Reason, but of my Faith only, and which God has not thought fit as yet to explain to me; as it is no part of my Undertaking, so would it be an Attempt altogether as fruitless, as every one must own it would be presumptuous.

However from the Doctrine of a Trinity in the Unity of God, thus stated from the Holy Scriptures, there are certain Consequences, which tho' I am not able to explain any more than I am the Doctrine itself; yet finding them so evidently to follow, and divers, if not all of them, to be plainly contained in the Holy Scriptures, I am ready to embrace and profess them, not only because I believe them to be true, but also that I would willingly give Satisfaction to all Christians, that under a general Confession of a Trinity and Unity in God, I do not secretly harbour any Explication that is really destructive

destructive of that Doctrine which outwardly and in Words I pretend to believe.

For Example, One and the very same Divine Nature, Substance, or Godhead, being common to the Three Persons, we must of Necessity say, that *such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.*

That *the Father is uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate.*

That *the Father is incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.*

And that *the Father is eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.*

But still because the Divine Nature is but one and the same, we must with the like Necessity add, *And yet they are not three Eternals but one Eternal: By which way of speaking we do not deny but that they are three Eternal Persons (still understanding the Word Person in the Sense I have but now given it) only we say and mean that they are not three Eternal Gods, but one only.*

As also it is in the same manner to be understood when we farther say, that there are not three Incomprehensibles, nor three Uncreated, but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible.

So likewise our Confession is to be interpreted, when we say the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almightyies, but one Almighty.

For so we expressly say, that *the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; because one and the same Godhead or Divine Nature is common to the three Persons:*

And yet that they are not three Gods, but one God; because we most firmly believe that the Divine Nature

ture neither

And so
that the Fa
Ghost Lord
And yet
Lord.

For like
rity, conta
ledge every
because we
the Holy C
ly spoken o

So are w
the same
three Gods
pressly tell

Farther
these Pers
guished on
is far abov
selves still
the very V
actly agree
taking upo
themselves.
done for us

Of the I
say, that h
gotten.

Of the S
ther alone,

And of
Spirit of the
reated, nor

These E
cause we
pture, and

ture neither is nor can be more than One.

And so likewise for the same Reason we say, that *the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.*

And yet that they are not three Lords, but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian Verity, contained in the Holy Scriptures, to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; because we there find the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be after that manner distinctly spoken of;

So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion, in the same Scriptures comprised, to say, there be three Gods or three Lords; because they so often expressly tell us that there is but one.

Farthermore, when also we speak of each of these Persons severally, and as they are distinguished one from the other, because the Matter is far above our Understanding, we think ourselves still in like manner obliged either to use the very Words of Scripture, or such as are exactly agreeable to the Tenour thereof, without taking upon us any farther to explain the things themselves, than what the Scripture has already done for us.

Of *the Father* then, as a distinct Person, we say, that he *is made of none, neither created nor begotten.*

Of *the Son* we say, that he *is the Son of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten.*

And of *the Holy Ghost* we say, that he *is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.*

These Expressions I say we make use of, because we find them exactly agreeable to Scripture, and the Representation that there is made

of the Divine Oeconomy (if I may so speak) without pretending to explain the exact Meaning of the Words [Begotten and Proceeding] or assigning the Difference between them, as upon this Occasion they are used; but altogether content with that Analogy which God has thus been pleased to signify that there is between the (to us) incomprehensible things of himself, and those of human kind with which we are familiarly acquainted.

As then we are careful to maintain and assert the Unity of the Divine Nature or Substance, *so* do we think it our Duty also to profess our Belief of the Number and Distinction of Persons which the Scripture sufficiently teaches us to be in the Godhead; it appearing most evidently from the Word of God, that in this Unity of Nature, Substance, or Essence, *there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts*; that is to say, three Persons, and neither more nor less, according to the Explication already given of the Word [Person.]

And since the Divine Nature, or Substance, is one and the same, and common to each and every of the three Persons; it must necessarily follow with respect thereunto, that *in this Trinity none is afore or after another, none is greater or less than another.*

But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is herein aforesaid and express'd, the Unity of God in the Trinity of Persons, and the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead is to be worshiped. And this is the fundamental Principle of the Catholick Faith, into which all Christians are by Christ himself commanded to be baptized, *Mat. xxviii. 19.*

But

But for
ling to con
pture, but
Contrivanc
consist in
Belief of t
known. W
Words, th
Faith, ma
sufficiently
understood
the Scriptu
not the Sc
ed Meaning
about For
one God i
the fundam
(as has bee
fore that v
be saved in
God has re
of the Trin
make use
sing of h
which the
use of to
being unde
the Holy S
spiritual an
to the Wo
self; it wo
quiet and
stinately r
but only b
they do n
use of to
but in su

But some perhaps will say, that they are willing to confess their Faith in the Words of Scripture, but not in any others that are of human Contrivance. I answer, that our Faith does not consist in this or that Form of Words, but in the Belief of the Things themselves that God has made known. And if any Ecclesiastical or Scholastick Words, that have been made use of to express our Faith, may perhaps to some seem doubtful or not sufficiently proper, such Words are always to be understood and interpreted in compliance with the Scripture, which is the Rule of our Faith, and not the Scripture in compliance with their supposed Meaning. Good Christians may possibly differ about Forms of Expression; but since to worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is the fundamental Principle of the Catholick Faith (as has been already said) it follows, that *he therefore that will* do all that is ordinarily necessary to *be saved* in that only sure and certain Way, which God has revealed and made known, *must thus think of the Trinity*, whatever Words he may happen to make use of for the more clear and better expressing of his Thoughts. But since those Words which the Christian Church has so long made use of to express their Belief of this Mystery, being understood according to that Analogy which the Holy Scripture often represents to be between spiritual and sensible things, are so fairly agreeable to the Words and Expressions of the Scripture itself; it would, I think, be an Argument of an unquiet and unpeaceable Temper in me, should I obstinately reject those Words for no other reason, but only because in their primary and literal Sense they do not agree unto the things they are made use of to express. If we must never speak of God but in such Terms as in the most strict and

literal Sense do agree unto him, for ought that I can find, we must for ever be silent about him, and neither demonstrate his Being, nor declare his Attributes, nor even set forth his Praises. But if all that we can possibly say of him, his Attributes, and Actions, must of Necessity be expressed not in literal but analogical Terms (as I think is sufficiently to be gathered from what I have said in the foregoing Discourse, § XXXIV, &c.) what imaginable Reason can be given, why any Man should obstinately reject such sort of Terms when we come to speak of that Trinity, which the Scripture so evidently represents to be in the Unity of the Godhead?

Furthermore, it is, in like manner, necessary to *everlasting Salvation* (I mean in that ordinary way and method which God has settled and established under the Gospel) *that he* who thus believes the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature, as is above set forth, *do also believe rightly* that the second Person in this Holy Trinity (who is called the Son or the Word) did, in the Fulness of Time, take human Nature upon him, and become Man for our sake; which we commonly call the *Doctrine of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

For altho' our weak and dark Reason is not able to explain or comprehend how or after what manner the Divine and Human Nature are conjoined together in one Person, any more than how three Persons can be united in the same Divine Nature; yet that the thing is really so, is so evidently to be collected from a great many Passages of Holy Scripture, which give this Account of him, that we cannot but acknowledge that *the right Faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.*

Being

Being the
he is **GOD**
whom he
Worlds from
culously con
therefore say
Mother, bor
And the I
compleat in
our Meaning
perfect Man
subsisting.

That he
Godhead, an
Manhood.

Who altho
Man, yet, f
ture in the
one single P
he is not two

And thou
the Manner
in Christ, a
prehension;
ons of our
is One, not
Flesh (which
possible) but
is by Natur
infinite.

And this
ing any Mix
stance (such
Two differ
gether in on
are join'd
Human Nat

Being the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, he is *GOD of the Substance of the Father* (with whom he is by Nature one) *begotten before the Worlds from all Eternity; and* having been miraculously conceived and born of a pure Virgin, we therefore say that he is *Man of the Substance of his Mother, born in the World.*

And the Divine and Human Nature being both compleat in him, we therefore farther express our Meaning by saying, that he is *perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and Human Flesh subsisting.*

That he is *equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood.*

Who altho' he be really and truly both God and Man, yet, finding him always spoken of in Scripture in the same manner as we usually speak of one single Person, we must of necessity say that he is not two, but one Christ.

And though we are not able fully to explain the Manner of the Unity of the Two Natures in Christ, as being altogether above our Comprehension; yet, to prevent all Misapprehensions of our Meaning herein, we say that Christ is *One, not by any Conversion of the Godhead into Flesh* (which we take to be a thing in itself impossible) *but by taking of the Manhood, which is by Nature finite, into God, who is a Being infinite.*

And this still to be understood without supposing any Mixture of the Divine and Human Substance (such as, for Example, there is between Two different Liquors when they are put together in one Vessel) for however God and Man are join'd in Christ, yet still the Divine and Human Nature in him remain distinct, tho' not separate

separate one from the other; for which Reason we say that Christ is *One altogether, not by Confusion of the Divine and Human Substance, but by the Conjunction of God and Man in Unity of Person.*

For (to illustrate this Matter a little, as far as we are capable) *as the reasonable Soul or Spirit, and Human Flesh or Body is, and makes but one Man, in whom still the Spirit and Body, however closely join'd together, do yet truly retain their several and distinct Natures; so God and Man, without any Alteration in either Nature or Substance, is, and constitutes but one Person in Christ.*

And this is he *who suffer'd for our Salvation, descended into Hell, and rose again the third Day from the Dead.*

He ascended into Heaven, he sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the Quick and the Dead.

At whose coming all Men shall rise again with their Bodies, and shall give Account for their own Works.

And they that have done Good (that is to say, have sincerely perform'd what God by the Gospel requires from us) shall go into Life everlasting, and they that have done Evil (that is to say, have liv'd wickedly, and not made their Peace with God by a timely Repentance) shall go into everlasting Punishment, which, for the Dreadfulness of it, is in scripture represented by the Appellation of Fire.

This Doctrine which I have now been setting forth, is, for Substance, the main and fundamental Part of the Catholick Faith; however, possible it is, that they who agree in one and the same true Belief, may yet (as I have already said)
sometimes

sometimes
wherein th
Man want
or sufficien
this Error
of his own
leave him
but as for
but yet wil
them in th
or reject an
because it
prov'd from
any other
thro' his
to such a
Faith, wh
sufficiently
fully, as fir
the Duties
be eternally

Sometimes differ about the Words or Terms wherein they make Profession of it. If indeed a Man wants Capacity to apprehend these things, or sufficient Information about them, so that this Error or Ignorance is not thro' any Fault of his own, I pass no Judgment upon him, but leave him to stand or fall to his own Master; but as for those who have sufficient Capacity, but yet will not hearken to what is propos'd to them in the Name and by the Authority of God, or reject any Doctrine that he has made known, because it cannot be directly explain'd by, or prov'd from the Principles of Reason; or if on any other Account a Man's want of Belief is thro' his own Neglect or Fault; with respect to such a Man as this, I say, that this is that Faith, *which except a Man receive when it is sufficiently propos'd to him, and believe so faithfully, as sincerely and conscientiously to perform the Duties that are grounded upon it, he cannot be eternally saved.*

F I N I S.





BOOKS Printed for THOMAS TRYE, near
Gray's-Inn-Gate in Holbourn.

I. A Gentleman's Religion, in Three Parts: The first contains the Principles of Natural Religion; the second and third the Doctrines of Christianity, both as to Faith and Practice: with an *Appendix*, wherein it is proved, that nothing contrary to our Reason can possibly be the Object of our Belief: but that it is no just Exception against some of the Doctrines of Christianity, that they are above our Reason. The Sixth Edition. Price 2 s.

II. Religion tryed by the Test of Sober and Impartial Reason. Price 6 d. or 5 s. per Dozen.

III. The Rule of Self-examination, or the only way of Banishing Doubts and Scruples, and Directing the Conscience in the satisfactory Practice of all Christian Duties. Price 4 d. or 3 s. per Dozen.

IV. Catholick Christianity, or an Essay towards lessening the Number of Controversies among *Christians*. The Second Edition. Price 6 d. or 5 s. per Dozen.

V. A Persuasive to the Study of the Holy Scriptures, in a Letter to a sober Gentleman of the Church of Rome. Price 6 d. or 5 s. per Dozen.

These five by the most Reverend Dr. *Edward Synge*,
Lord Archbishop of *Tuam* in *Ireland*.

A Compendious View of the Religion of Nature Delineated: Being an Abridgment of Mr. *Woolaston's* Treatise under that Title. To which is added an *Appendix* concerning the Christian Religion.

Non sordidus auctor natura, verique.

HORAT.

—*Sed summa sequar fastigia rerum.*

VIRG.

The Second Edition. Price Two Shillings.

THE

4

R U L E

O F

Self-Examination ;

O R,

The only Way of Banishing

Doubts and Scruples,

A N D

Directing the Conscience in the Satisfac-
tory Practice of all *Christian Duties*.

By the most Reverend

Dr. *EDWARD SYNGE*,

Late Lord ARCHBISHOP of *Tuam*, in *Ireland*.

A New EDITION corrected.

L O N D O N,

Printed for THOMAS TRYE, near *Grays-Inn-
Gate* in *Holbourn*. MDCCLI.

[Price 4d. or 1 l. 5s. per Hundred.]

Self

T

the time
which is
acknowled
as well as
40. *Gal.*
be taken

Now
to this gr
is but on
cessary to
as they co
ly, *Is th*
it be a Sin
for God's
been guil
for the re
not again
Sin at all,
merly I h
upon me,
The o

The R U L E of Self-Examination, &c.

TH A T it is the Duty of every Man often to make a strict Enquiry into all his Actions, in order to repent of whatever he has done amiss for the time past, and to amend his Life, for that which is to come ; is readily by all Christians acknowledged to be the Voice even of *Reason* as well as *Holy Scripture* (1 Cor. xi. 28. Lam. iii. 40. Gal. vi. 4.) and therefore at present shall be taken for granted.

Now when at any time a Man sets himself to this great Work of *Self-Examination*, there is but one single question that is absolutely necessary to be put upon every *Action* or *Omission*, as they come in their order before him ; namely, *Is this [Action or Omission] a Sin ?* For if it be a Sin, I am bound not only to supplicate for God's Pardon, if I find my self to have been guilty of it ; but also to watch carefully for the remaining part of my Life, that I do not again run into the same : But if it be no Sin at all, I remain at my Liberty to do as formerly I have done, without any other Restraint upon me, but that of common Prudence.

The only Rule whereby to know whether

any thing (be it an Action or an Omission, or whatever else you may call it) is a *Sin*, or not, is to bring it to a Tryal by *God's Law*. For *Sin* is nothing else but *the Transgression of the Law*, 1. John iii. 4. and where no Law is, there is no Transgression, Rom. iv. 15. Nor would it be a Sin to disobey the *Law of Man*, if God by the Law either of *Reason* or *Revelation* (had not commanded us (as indeed he has done by both) to be subject to the Higher Powers, Rom. xiii. 1. And to submit our selves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake, 1 Pet. ii. 13.

That I may therefore offer some Assistance to every Man, who needs it, in a Work of so great Importance, whereon the Peace of his Conscience, and his Eternal Salvation do in a great Measure depend; I shall endeavour to shew.

First, What the *Law of God* is, and how upon all Occasions we may come to the true Knowledge, and a right Notion of it.

Secondly, What it is to *transgress* this Law; and wherein such *Transgression* does alone consist.

Thirdly, How, and after what manner, we may best proceed in trying thereby whether any Action or Omission be a Sin, so as to avoid all Perplexity and Delusion.

As to the first of these Things; However some may a little differ from others in Words or Expressions; yet as to the Sense and Meaning, all Men do agree in this Definition of the Law

Law of
thing else
intended

When
Rule of
Thus it
World,
to send h
for the F

When
Rule to
call it th
Will, or
Creation,
Heat, th
turn at th
Plants sh
per Fruit
Kinds, an
ceive such
Womb v
rished.

But w
Rule to t
have in t
they will
Comman
proper ac
is God's
Law, tha
Him abo
another;
commit
and Temp

Law of God, viz. *The Law of God* is nothing else but *the Will of God*, as far as it is intended to be the Rule of our Actions.

When the Will of God is intended for a Rule of his own Actions, we call it his *Decree*. Thus it was his *Will* or *Decree* to create the World, to create Man after his own Image, to send his Son to take our Nature upon him for the Redemption of Mankind.

When the Will of God is intended as a Rule to the Actions of necessary Agents, we call it the *Law of the Creation*. Thus it is his *Will*, or, in other Words, the *Law of the Creation*, that the Sun should give Light and Heat, that the Seasons of the Year should return at their certain Periods, that Herbs and Plants should grow, and bring forth such proper Fruit or Seed as is agreeable to their several Kinds, and that all Living Creatures should receive such and such certain Shapes in the Egg or Womb wherein they are conceived and nourished.

But when the Will of God is intended as a Rule to the Actions of Voluntary Agents, who have in themselves a Power of choosing what they will do, or forbear to do, we call it the Command, or *Law of God*, in the strict and proper acceptation of the Word *Law*. Thus it is God's *Will*, that is to say, his Command, or *Law*, that we should Love, Honour, and Fear Him above all things; that we should love one another; that we should not Murder, Steal, or commit Adultery; but be Just, True, Sober, and Temperate in all our Actions.

Now the Way whereby we come to find out this *Will*, or *Law* of God [which we are to take for the Rule of our Actions] is twofold, viz. *Reason* and *Revelation*.

They who wanted the Assistance of *Revelation*, might yet (and many of them accordingly did) by the help of *Reason*, discover the Being and most principal Attributes of God ; as being plainly to be inferred from the various Works of the Creation, and the Beautiful as well as Useful Structure of the World : *Because* (says the Apostle) *that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the Invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his Eternal Power and Godhead, Rom. i. 19, 20.*

And when we have thus discovered ; As we may do by *Reason* alone ; that God, who made the World, and all things therein, is most Just, True, Wise, Powerful, and Beneficent ; It is easy from hence to gather, even to a Demonstration, that it is his *Will* that we, who are his Rational Creatures, should love and reverence him above all things ; do all the Good we can one for another ; and make no other use of any of his Creatures, but that for which he has put them within our Power : Or in other Terms, *that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World. Tit. ii. 12.* And the *Will* of God, as far as it is thus

to

to be fo
in its
Duties,
which,
ral Und
ing, tel
not the
Things
the [rev
which
their Ho
ness, &c

But b
Men is
fit to pr
what R
ver :
unto us
Wherei
cepts of
superad
stitution
Cause o
lay an
Men, b
arbitrary
as these
call by t

Of th
given to
still upo
the Ob
our Savi

to be found out by *Reason*, and farther traced in its several Branches even unto particular Duties, is what we call the *Moral Law* : Of which, as thus discoverable by our own Natural Understanding, the same Apostle speaking, tell us, that *when the Gentiles which have not the [revealed] Law, 'do by Nature the Things contained in the Law ; these having not the [revealed] Law, are a Law unto themselves ; which shew the Work of the Law written in their Hearts, their Conscience also bearing Witness, &c.* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

But because the Light of *Reason* in most Men is very dim ; and God also has thought fit to prescribe some *Laws* unto Man, beyond what Reason alone could ever possibly discover : He has farther made known his *Will* unto us by *Revelation* in the holy Scriptures : Wherein he has again repeated all the Precepts of the *Moral Law*, and also thought fit to superadd some Sanctions of meer *positive Institution* ; That is to say, for which no other Cause or Reason can be assigned sufficient to lay an Obligation upon the Consciences of Men, but only this, that it is God's free and arbitrary Pleasure or *Will* ; And such *Laws* as these, for distinction sake, we commonly call by the Name of *Positive Laws*.

Of these *Positive Laws* a great many were given to the People of *Israel* ; as they remain still upon Record in the *Old Testament* ; But the Obligation of them all is taken away by our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, who has *blotted out*
the

the Hand-writing of Ordinances, and taken it out of the way, nailing it to his Cross, Col. ii. 14. But all the *Moral* Precepts that are in the *Old Testament*, together with *all* the Precepts, whether *Moral* or *Positive*, which we find in the *New*; are by all Christians acknowledged to be of standing and perpetual Obligation; And that for this Reason, and none other; Namely, because it is the *Will of God* that we should conform our Practice to them, or that they should be the *Rule of our Actions*; for which Reason we call them the *Laws of God*.

If any Precept then (whether Affirmative or Negative) be at any time advanced as a *Law of God*, let us have immediate recourse to sober *Reason*, and to the *Holy Scriptures*: If from them, or either of them, it can sufficiently be prov'd to be the *Will of God* that we should thus do, or forbear to do, as the Precept requires; then indeed we are bound to receive such Precept, as being *God's Law*, and accordingly to give Obedience to it. But whatever Art or Pains may be used to give a plausible Colour to any thing, if it cannot be prov'd that *such is the Will of God*; It neither is, nor can be his *Law*, being destitute of his Authority; but must be condemned and rejected as an *addition* to it. *Deut. iv. 2.*

And thus I have done with the First thing proposed; which was to shew what the *Law of God* is, and how upon all Occasions, we may come to the true Knowledge, and a right Notion of it, I come now to the

Second,

Second
gress the
does also
If to
to the R
gress the
of it) can
that Ru
And find
his Will
Actions
Law is to
it; But
sign, tha
the just I
to come t
possible t
hended in
of God in
to be exp
of every
tend to ea
by it; T
come so v
possibly t
Consideri
Creature,
hend wha
quent from
expressed b
his Instru
the Laws
Words and

Second, Which is to shew what it is to *Transgress* this Law, and wherein such *Transgression* does alone consist.

If to *keep* the Law be to *conform our Actions to the Rule which it prescribes*, then to *Transgress* the Law (which is opposite to the *keeping* of it) can signify nothing else but to *depart from that Rule*, or to act otherwise than it directs: And since the Law of God is nothing else but his *Will*, as it is intended for the Rule of our Actions; It must follow that the *Rule* of the Law is to be taken not from the *bare Letter of it*; But altogether from its true *intent and design*, that is, the *Will* of God, as far as, from the just Interpretation of the Law, we are able to come to the knowledge of it: It being very possible that *less* or *more* may be comprehended in the *design* of such a Law, or rather of God in making the Law, than what seems to be express'd in the *Letter* of it. If the Words of every Divine Precept were *expressly* to extend to each particular Case that is to be ruled by it; The Laws of God must of necessity become so very large and voluminous, as not possibly to be even *remembered* by any Man: Considering therefore that Man is a *Rational* Creature, and thereby able fully to comprehend whatever is plainly *implied* in, or *consequent* from a Law, as well as what is *literally expressed* by it; It is abundantly sufficient for his Instruction in all the Parts of his Duty, that the Laws of God should be set down in few Words and general Terms; Provided that he
has

Has any proper and certain way of *interpreting* each Law, so as to *extend* or *limit* it, according as the true *intention* of it requires in each particular Case that at any time comes under it.

It will not perhaps be disputed but that the *Rule* of every *Law* of God consists in, and therefore is by us to be taken from, the *design* of it: But then it will be demanded, What other Way have we, besides the *Words* of the Law it self, to find out this same *Design*? Or are we to suppose concerning any such Law, that it has any *other* or *farther* *Design* than what we find to be *express'd* in the very terms of it?

I answer, That the Signification of Words, being not natural or necessary; but altogether *arbitrary*, and sometimes *ambiguous*: And great Changes being often made therein by Use and Custom; If we had no other way of finding out the *Design* of God's Laws, but by keeping close to the *express Terms* wherein they are delivered to us; The Consequence must be, that as often as the *Words* of any of them become doubtful, or receive a change in their Signification, the like Change or Ambiguity must of necessity be derived into the *Law* it self; which is so monstrous an Absurdity, that no Man, I am sure, will ever offer to defend it. It follows therefore that there must be some other Method of finding out the *true Design* of God's Laws, and whereby we may be able to prevent or correct the Errors that too close an Adherence to the literal Signi-

Signific
betray u

First
sober Re
Truth,

terpret a
to us, i
them, l
contrad

Law (o
the unc
allowed
unaltera

der the
Law wh
fere or l

prescrib
two La
and yet

furd as t
true and
down as

served o
is so to
thereof a
the Mor

For I
that eve
should b

vour to
that he
i Tim.

needeth,

Signification of Words, would otherwise often betray us to.

First then ; As the *Principles of clear and sober Reason*, being of eternal and unalterable *Truth*, do lay us under a necessity not to interpret any *Doctrine* which God has delivered to us, in contradiction to them, or any of them, because two Truths cannot possibly be contradictory one to the other ; so the *Moral Law* (of which I have already spoken) being the unquestionable dictate of *Reason* also, and allowed by all sober Men to be of eternal and unalterable *Obligation*, must needs lay us under the like Necessity of not interpreting any *Law* which God has given us, so as to interfere or be inconsistent with any Duty that is prescribed by it : Because this were to suppose two Laws of God at the same time *obligatory* and yet *inconsistent* ; which is altogether as absurd as that two Propositions should be both *true* and yet *contradictory*. I therefore lay it down as an undoubted Rule, to be always observed on this occasion, That *no Law of God is so to be interpreted as to make the Design thereof any way inconsistent with any Duty which the Moral Law requires from us.*

For Example, The Moral Law requires that every Man, according to his Ability, should by his honest Care and Industry endeavour to put himself into such a Condition as that he may be able to *provide for his own*, 1 Tim. v. 8. and also *to give unto him that needeth*, Eph. iv. 28. When therefore God gives

gives us a Law that we should *take no thought even for our own Life, what we shall eat, drink, or put on*, Mat. vi. 25. no not even for *the morrow*, v. 34. it is manifest that the *design* hereof is not to exclude that prudent *thought* or forecast, which is a *Moral Duty*; but only that *anxious care and thoughtfulness*, which is contrary to the trust and dependence which we always ought to have on God's good Providence.

The *Moral Law* requires that no Man should willingly take away the Life of an Innocent Person, which is *Murder*. Exod. xx. 13. Altho' therefore God has given a Law that we should not *take his Name in vain*, Exod. xx. 7. or *forswear our selves, but that we should perform unto the Lord our Oaths*, Mat. v. 33. and that *when we vow a Vow unto the Lord we should not be slack to pay it*; Deut. xxiii. 21. yet if a Man should Swear or Vow to God to take away the Life of any one who is Innocent; All Men do allow that he would not be obliged to keep such an Oath, or perform a Vow of that Sort, altho' he had bound it upon himself by ten thousand Imprecations.

Another Rule to be followed in seeking for the true *Design* of God's Law is this, That *whatever Interpretation he has been pleased to give us of any such Law is always to be received as authentic*; and the *Design of the Law is to be extended or limited according to such Interpretation*. The *Truth* of this Rule will not be deny'd

ny'd o
ledges
of it wi
Thou
commit
which
if we g
Laws,
tain'd b
Actions
will tak
God by
given u
be exten
outward
another
or to loo
by the L
as Adult
27, &c.
Again
do any W
ther of C
Work] a
our shew
them, th
Sense, fo
cessity an
23, &c. a
the Reas
interpretati
for Man,
that God

ny'd or disputed by any one who acknowledges God's Infinite Wisdom; and the Use of it will appear by an Instance or two.

Thou shalt do no Murder; Thou shalt not commit Adultery; are two of the known Laws which God has given to all Mankind: Now if we go no farther than to the *Letter* of these Laws, it is evident that no more is therein contain'd but only a restraint from the *outward Actions* which are there forbidden. But if we will take that *Interpretation* of them which God by the Mouth of our blessed Saviour has given us; It is no less certain that they are to be *extended* as well to the *inward Desires* as *outward Actions*: And even to be angry with another beyond what there is a just *Cause* for, or to *look upon a Woman to lust after her*, are by the *Design* of those Laws as truly forbidden as *Adultery* or *Murder*, Mat. v. 21, &c. and 27, &c.

Again, *The Seventh Day—Thou shalt not do any Work*, is an express Sanction of another of God's Laws: But tho' the Words [*any Work*] are as *general* as may be, yet our Saviour shews, and proves, that as to the *Design* of them, they are to be understood in a *limited* Sense, so as not to include the Works of Necessity and Charity. Mat. xii. 1, &c. Mar. ii. 23, &c. and c. iii. 1. &c. Luke vi. 1, &c. And the Reasons that he has given for such his Interpretation (*viz.* that *the Sabbath was made for Man, and not Man for the Sabbath*; And that God prefers Works of *Mercy* before the

B

offering

offering of *Sacrifice* ; *Hof. vi. 6.*) are a plain Indication that *Whatever is* [not Moral, but only] *Positive in the Law of God, is not so rigorously to be extended, according to the Letter, as to be inconsistent with those Comforts which he* [by his Moral Law] *most freely allows unto Man, or with that Love and Compassion which all Men* [by the same Law] *are bound to exercise one towards another:* Except there be something in such Positive Law that necessarily requires a stricter Interpretation.

And because it would have been endless in writing to have set down all those Explications of the several Laws of God, which are necessary for the Application of them to that vast variety of particular Cases which daily arise : That we may not therefore be at a loss herein, He has graciously been pleased in some remarkable Places both of the *Old and New Testament*, to give us such an Account of the *general tendency of all his Laws*, as may suffice to shew us the *intent and meaning* of each of them, if at any time it does not appear to be fully express'd in the Words or Letter. Thus (*Isa. i. 11, &c.*) God seems even to slight *Sacrifices and Burnt-Offerings*, with other positive Institutions, altho' of his own Appointing, in respect of *Judgment, relieving the Oppressed, judging the Fatherless, pleading for the Widow*. After the same manner also he speaks *Mich. vi. 6, &c.* and gives his People, by his Prophet, to understand, that the great things which alone he indispensably *requires* from

them,
Justly,
God.

Law and
two Co
our Ne
end of
fured,
and W
teously,

11, 12
ture, v
we may

Tha
be unde
ting of
or exten
where j
to prom
a groun
For if f
ranted o
implicit
What o
to exten
us ?

And
propose
transgre
Transgr
the Law
which i

them, as being in themselves *good*, are *to do Justly, to love Mercy, and to walk Humbly with God*. Our Saviour tells us, that the whole *Law and the Prophets* intirely hang upon these two *Commandments*, viz. *The Love of God and our Neighbour*; *Mat. xxii. 40*. And the great end of his coming into the World, we are assured, was *to teach us that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World. Tit. ii. 11, 12*. From which Passages of Holy Scripture, with many others to the same purpose, we may draw this farther Rule, viz.

That the design of every Law of God is so to be understood as may most conduce to the promoting of Moral Virtue and Piety: And To limit or extend any such Law beyond the Letter of it, where such limitation or extention does not tend to promote Moral Virtue or Piety, is altogether a groundless and unwarrantable Presumption. For if such extention, or limitation, is not warranted either *expressly* by the Word of God, or *implicitly* by the general Tendency of his Law; What other Ground can we possibly have so to extend or limit any Law that he has given us?

And thus I have done with the second thing proposed, which was to shew what it is to *transgress* the Law of God, and wherein such *Transgression* does alone consist. To transgress the Law of God is to depart from the *Rule* which it prescribes. This *Rule* is to be taken

altogether from the *Design* of the Law : Which *Design* (however the *Letter* of the Law it self may sometimes seem but imperfectly to express it) must always be consistent with all the *Duties of Morality* ; must be limited or extended according as God himself has interpreted it ; must still be so understood as most may tend to the promoting of Moral Virtue and Piety ; And is not upon any other Account to be limited or extended beyond what is contained in the express Letter of it.

I proceed now to the third Thing proposed, which was to shew how and after what manner we may best proceed in trying, by the Law of God, whether any Action or Omission be a Sin, [so as to avoid all perplexity and delusion.]

If you would certainly know whether a Line runs strait, or is [perhaps a little] crooked ; your Eye, if you judge by that alone, may deceive you ; and more especially so, if the Light by which you see is either false or obscure : But place it in a true and clear Light, apply the Rule close to it, and carefully observe its agreement with, or disagreement from it, and if your Eye be not very bad, you will easily discover if there be any remarkable crookedness in it. In like manner, if you desire to know whether the doing or omitting such or such an Action is a Sin or not ; if you pass Sentence upon a slight Observation, or suffer your self to be influenced by your own or other Mens Fancy, Imagination, or Prejudice, you may in many Cases be easily deceived and misled in
your

your J
or Om
(which
judge o
possess
other C
ny diffi
to go in
Conden
manner
as that,
found a
about t

But
Task, I
I take i
of God
in the a
bids, o
mands :
tion eith
ral] Na
with the
an Inter
when th
will suff
the trya
Lawful
we are t
tention
other.
to lay d
observec

your Judgment. But bring that same Action or Omission to a fair Tryal by *the Law of God* (which is the *only Rule* whereby we are to judge of a Sin) and lay aside all those Prepossessions of Mind which often do arise from other Causes ; And it will not ordinarily be any difficult Matter to find out how far we are to go in our Sentence either of Acquittal or Condemnation. How then, and after what manner this same *Tryal* is to be managed, so as that, in all such Cases, we may frame a sound and just Judgment, is what I am now about to enquire into.

But before I enter upon this Part of my Task, I desire the Reader to observe, that as I take it for granted that every Sin, or Breach of God's Law, must of necessity consist either in the *doing* something which the Law forbids, or *omitting* something which it commands: So do I also freely allow that an *intention* either to do, or omit, is of the same [Moral] Nature, and comes under the same Law with the *Omission* or *Action* it self. But since an Intention to omit, or act, is then only a Sin when the Omission, or Action it self is so ; It will suffice to shew how we must proceed in the tryal of an *Action* or *Omission* ; from the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of which alone we are to frame the like Judgment of the *Intention* which leads either to the one or the other. Which being premised, I come now to lay down the Necessary Rules that are to be observed in order to make a clear and full dis-

covery whether any *Action* or *Omission*, of which we have at any time a doubt, be really and truly a Sin or not.

If then at any time we have the least suspicion or apprehension that the *doing* or *omitting* of this or that may be a *Sin*; The first thing necessary to be done, in order to the satisfactory determination of the Matter, is to *fix upon some certain Law or Laws of God*, whereby to make a Tryal of it. For since *Sin* is nothing else but *the Transgression of the Law*, it is impossible to know that any thing is a *Sin*, except we also know *what Law is thereby transgressed*: And as it is a great weakness of Mind to imagine that any thing is or can be a Sin on any other Account but this; so without this to endeavour any other way to beget in Men an opinion of the Sinfulness of an Action or Omission, can only serve to perplex weak Consciences, by either leading them into Error, or leaving them at an Uncertainty in Matters of Religion and Duty.

For Example: The Church of *Rome* lays Sin to our Charge because we reject, and refuse to join with them in, divers things which they account to be necessary Parts of the Christian Religion; And they who dissent from our Established Church do bring such another Charge (tho' not altogether so heavy) against us, because we our selves conform, and require their Conformity also to those Rites and Ceremonies which by Lawful Authority are, for Decency and Order's Sake, appointed to be used

used and
vine
make
Papists
by the
Primo
Catho
siding
Repre
fallibi
Schism
Art w
tation.
Word
use of
to be
Symbol
Signifi
tion, I
ments,
many
seem v
dle Ca
sential
ference
are per
enterta
tions o
self as
when
Words
distinct
all time

used and observed in the performance of Divine Service amongst us : But how do they make good their several Charges ? Why the Papists take great pains to amuse Mens Minds by the false or wrested Notions of *St. Peter's Primacy, The Pope's being his Successor, The Catholick Church its Unity, and Authority residing chiefly in its Visible-Head the Pope, and its Representatives in a general Council ; With Infallibility, Tradition, Catholick Faith, Heresie, Schism,* and many more Words and Terms of Art which are frequently brought into Disputation. And on the other side, the difficult Words and Phrases which the Dissenters make use of in their Controversy with us, to me seem to be no less an Amusement, such as *Popery, Symbolizing with Idolaters, Mystical Rites, Significant Ceremonies, Will-worship, Superstition, Human Inventions, making new Sacraments,* and the like : To which if we add the many Scholastick Terms which some Men seem very fond of using even when they handle Cases of Conscience ; such as *Essence, Essential Form, Sacramental Action, Specifick Difference, &c.* it is not to be wonder'd if many are perplext with Doubts and Scruples, many entertain wrong, or at best, but confused Notions of Religion, and many reject Religion it self as a thing impossible to be understood, when they find so great a stress laid upon Words, of which they understand not the distinct Signification. Not that I would at all times condemn such hard or obscure Words,
which

which for want of others that are more plain, may sometimes, with Profit to those who are able to understand them, be made use of in Disputations even about Matters of Religion and Conscience : But as the plainest Expressions are generally the best, especially when Men are to be directed in the way to Heaven ; so is it a foolish and absurd thing, by any Words whatsoever, to attempt to prove any thing to be a Sin without assigning some Law of God of which it is and must be a Violation, or else it can have nothing Sinful in it. For *where no Law is there neither is* nor can be *any Transgression.*

Altho' therefore we have often given a full and abundant Answer to all the Allegations of our Adversaries, and hard Words wherewith they endeavour unjustly to load us ; yet it were enough for us to say, that if they tax us with any *Sin* whether of *Omission* or *Commission*, it is incumbent upon them to assign and point out the *particular Laws of God* that we have broken ; or else their whole Accusation must immediately vanish into Smoak. For altho' it is possible that one single Action or Omission may at once be a Breach of several of God's Laws ; yet to persist in it, that any one is guilty of a Sin, without shewing what Law of God it is that he has broken, is to the last degree Absurd and even Ridiculous.

But since all the Laws of God are now in the Holy Scriptures consigned to us in writing ; and it is possible that more or less may be

be co
what
it ; a
Law
sists a
Letter

From
served
enquir
Omissi
ly fix
God v
that h
port,
before
proved
be not
ried o
sequen
sion o
false a

For
ther o
any A
party o
that to
ever, a
a Sin,
produc
self, M
not at
yea, yea
these c

be contained under the *Design* of a Law than what appears to be expressed in the *Letter* of it ; and moreover also since the *Rule* of the Law (whereby alone all *Sin* is to be tried) consists altogether in the *Design* and not the *bare Letter* of it, as I have already shewn ;

From hence arises a Second Rule to be observed by every one who would impartially enquire, whether any particular Action or Omission be a Sin : Which is, that he not only fix upon some particular Law or Laws of God whereby to make the Tryal ; But also that he fully and fairly enquire into the Import, Scope, and *Design* of such Law or Laws before he bring the Action or Omission to be proved or tried by the Test of it. For if this be not done, it is evident that the Trial is carried on and made by a wrong Rule, and, consequently it is a meer chance if the Conclusion or Sentence that is past be not altogether false and unjust.

For Example ; Let the Question be whether or no it be Lawful under the Gospel on any Account to take an Oath ? There is one party of Men whose avowed Principle it is, that to take an Oath upon any Occasion whatever, and even before a lawful Magistrate, is a Sin, and for the Proof of their Opinion they produce the express Command of *Christ* himself, Mat. v. 34, &c. *I say unto you swear not at all—But let your Communication be yea, yea, nay, nay : For whatsoever is more than these cometh of Evil :* As well as those of St.

James,

James, *But above all things, my Brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, neither by Earth, neither by any other Oath.* Jam. v.

12. But if we consider the Nature of an Oath, that *in its self*, if reverently taken, it is an acknowledgment of God's Truth, Holiness, Knowledge, Power, and Justice, and consequently a solemn Act of Honour and Worship paid to him; That under the Mosaick Law it was not only allowed of, but also expressly prescribed, and that in a Controversy of no greater value than a single *Sheep*: *Exod. xxii. 10, 11.* That it has been openly practised both before and under the Law, and also under the Gospel, not only by the best of Men, but even by the Angels themselves; and this practice recorded in holy Scripture without the least Disapprobation of it: (*Gen. xxi. 24. and 31, 53, and 47, 31. 1 Sam. xx. 42. Rom. i. 19. 2 Cor. i. 23. Dan. xii. 7. Rev. x. 5, 6.*) That even *God* is said to have sworn by himself: *Heb. vi. 17.* And an Oath at the same time, as taken by Men, is spoken of as a Thing not only Lawful, but very fit and proper for the *ending of Strife*: ver. 16. That before the coming of *Christ* the Civil Power had a *right* of requiring an Oath from every Subject as a Security for his Truth and Fidelity in all Cases where the Distribution of Justice, or safety of the Publick required it; Nor does it appear that our Saviour had the least design either of depriving *Magistrates* of any part of their Lawful Right, or rendering the Fidelity or Truth of their *Subjects* less certain,

or

or more
ing; A
ing upo
mong
there w
but onl
say, we
beyond
Design
quently
ner are
versally
only in
inconfi
voke th
agreeab
we alwa
wards t
sober E
mand o
Case up
fest tha
ther er
This
necessar
the *De*
from it
the disc
suffici
with th
would
gether,
From

or more suspicious than it was before his coming ; And lastly, that at the time of his being upon Earth, it was a received Opinion among the Jews as well as the Heathens, that there was no Sin in customary, or unnecessary, but only in False-Swearing, or Perjury ; If, I say, we consider all these things, it will appear beyond all reasonable Cause of doubt, that the *Design* of our Saviour's Words (and consequently those of St. *James*, which in a Manner are but a Repetition of them) was not universally to forbid all Oaths whatsoever, but only in common Conversation, or in light and inconsiderable Matters, where to use or invoke the Name of God, was by no Means agreeable to that profound Reverence which we always ought to maintain and preserve towards the Divine Majesty : And if without a sober Enquiry into the *Design* of this Command of our Saviour, we should determine the Case upon the bare *Letter* of it ; it is manifest that our Determination would be altogether erroneous.

This single Instance is enough to shew how necessary it is to make a sufficient enquiry into the *Design* of God's Law, before we conclude from it that any thing is a Sin : But because the discovery of a Sin can only be made by a sufficient comparing of an Action or Omission with the Rule of God's Law, and he that would sufficiently compare any two things together, ought well to understand them both.

From hence arises a third Rule no less necessary

cessary than the two former, in the business upon which we now are, which is, that before we pronounce any *Action* or *Omission* to be a Sin, *we thoroughly consider and well understand the true Moral Nature and import of such Action or Omission*: For as if I do not distinctly see the *Line* as well as the *Rule*; it is not possible for me so to apply it thereto, as sufficiently to judge of its crookedness or straightness; so if I have not a right notion as well of the *Action* or *Omission*, upon which I am to make a Judgment, as of the *Law* which is the only Rule whereby in such a Case I am to judge; there neither is nor can be any rational Grounds upon which I may form my Opinion one way or other: And a Man may as well pretend to determine the Shape and Colour of an Object which he very imperfectly sees at a Mile or two's Distance, as the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of an Action or Omission, of whose *Moral Nature* he has no clear or distinct apprehension. Or if this Expression [*Moral Nature*] may to some seem a little obscure; By it I mean not only the bare Action or Omission, but also every Adjunct and Circumstance of it; on Account of which it may be supposed to come under the Regulation of any Law of God: Of all which if we have not a full and clear Notion, it will not be possible to distinguish what is really sinful from that which is not so; especially if there happens to be some little *outward Resemblance* between them.

For

For
Com
just V
Battle
any C
kills
One M
other
does t
Men f
A Pro
when
Lord's
his De
Benefi
nance
Body,
Host
ceives.
sion m
ture,
to his
ten to
render
lous. A
for som
votary
offers h
some ot
Alms to
well ab
rity for
digent;

For Example ; One Man fighting by a Commission from Lawful Authority, and in a just War kills a publick Enemy in the Field of Battle ; another in a private Quarrel, without any Commission or Authority but his own, kills his Adversary in a premeditated Duel : One Man gives Relief to the Poor upon no other Motive but that of Charity ; another does the like that he may get Praise among Men for the seeming Goodness of his Actions. A Protestant of the Established Church kneels when he receives the Blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that he may thereby express his Devotion and Thankfulness to God for the Benefit which he receives by this holy Ordinance ; a Papist observes the same posture of Body, that he may thereby adore that very *Host* (as they call it) which he afterwards receives. A serious Man upon a proper Occasion makes use of the Words of Holy Scripture, that he may give a greater weight to his Discourse ; a profane Scoffer affects often to speak in Scripture Phrase, that he may render Religion and the Word of God ridiculous. A Subject kneels and petitions his Prince for somewhat of which he stands in need ; a votary of the Church of *Rome* kneels also and offers his Petitions to the Virgin *Mary*, or some other Saint. One Man omits to give an Alms to a proper Object, because (being not well able to relieve both) he reserves his Charity for one whom he knows to be more indigent ; another refuses to relieve the same

C

poor

poor Man, and bestows the Money he should give in Charity upon some trifle or vanity. One Man omits his ordinary Morning Devotion, because some Business of great Consequence, that cannot be deferred, unavoidably comes upon him; another does the like because he is in haste to go abroad upon some Sport or Diversion. It is plain from 1 Cor. x. 25, &c. that Meat which had been *offered in Sacrifice to Idols*, was sometimes after that *sold in the Shambles*, and *set before* the Guests at a Private Entertainment: And among the Christians, who sometimes were *bidden to a Feast* by some of their Heathen Neighbours; one perhaps freely eat of such Food (*asking no question for Conscience Sake*) because he saw no one there present who was like to take any Offence at the use of his Christian Liberty; another, it may be, eat of the same, altho' he well knew that his weak Brother would therewith be offended; and a third possessed with a false Notion that the thing was in it self unlawful, might yet do it even contrary to the Dictates of his own [mistaken] Conscience. Thousands of Instances might be given both of Actions and Omissions which in outward shew have, at the first glance, some Resemblance, more or less, the one to the other, upon which yet we are not to pass the same Judgment; as we should be apt to do if we *judged only according to the Appearance*: But before we pass Sentence either of Acquital or Condemnation upon them, we must fully consider them,

and

and the
count,
in the
and the
such C
ment,]

And
propose
first fix
God w
and sec
Design
thirdly,
Action
Adjunct
bring it
(which
of it) th
to disco
ly to dis
sions, w
to have

Before
Uses tha
I have h
this one
namely,
other, th
whether
use of in
the Quest
a Duty.

Transgre

and thoroughly enquire how far, on what Account, and for what Reason, they come within the compass of any, and what Law of God; and then, and then only, we shall be able in such Cases as these to *Judge Righteous Judgment*, John vii. 24.

And thus I have done with the third thing proposed; the Sum of which is this: If we first fix upon some certain Law or Laws of God whereby to try any Action or Omission; and secondly, enquire into the full Scope and Design of such Law or Laws; and then, thirdly, take a clear and distinct view of the Action or Omission itself, together with all its Adjuncts and Circumstances, as far as they bring it under the Regulation of God's Law (which is what I mean by the *Moral Nature* of it) then, and not till then, we shall be able to discover whether or no it is a Sin, and clearly to distinguish it from other Actions or Omissions, which in outward appearance may seem to have some resemblance to it.

Before I come to point out the principal Uses that are to be made of the Doctrine which I have hitherto been establishing, I must make this one [obvious yet necessary] Remark; namely, that the very same Method, and no other, that is to be observed in finding out whether any thing be a *Sin*; must also be made use of in all our searches and Enquiries, where the Question is, Whether this or that thing be a *Duty*. For as *Sin* is nothing else but the *Transgression of God's Law*, so is *Duty* no-

thing else but our *Conformity to it*. As then by the due Application of a straight Rule, we as well discover the *straightness* as the *crookedness* of a Line; so by the careful comparing of each Action or Omission, with the Rule of the Law, we can only be sure whether either of them be a *Duty*, as well as whether either of them be a *Sin*: And if any *Action* be a *Sin*, then to *omit* or forbear that Action must needs be a *Duty*; and on the contrary, if to *omit* any Action be a *Sin*, then of necessity it must be a Duty to *do* it. In a word, since the *Law of God* is the only Rule of *Moral Good and Evil*, there is no other way but by it to make a Tryal of the one as well as of the other.

The Application of all that I have hitherto said will chiefly concern two sorts of Persons. First, those who hastily venture upon any thing, before they have sufficiently enquired into the Lawfulness of it: And secondly, those who are over scrupulous and fearful lest this or that thing, be a Sin, which really is not so.

First, then, how many Men are there in the World, who commonly take the Measures of the principal Part of their Lives altogether from their Pleasure, their Profit, their Passions, or the Customs of this World, without any other regard to the Law of God, except it be to avoid such things as are openly accounted Scandalous: And this itself not really out of Conscience, but only Regard to their Credit and Reputation in the Sight of Men?

One

One
ple,
tage
mak
fraud
Desig
forbi
ture.
or ev
Neig
it be
man
be tr
and
man
ther
leng
to th
Text
veng
excep
a ple
ward
Duty
on us
giving
other
also
read
whic
tain
with
Hear

One Man endeavours, without the least Scruple, to over-reach another, or takes Advantage of his necessity to screw him up in the making of a Bargain; not considering that all fraudulent or oppressive Gain is contrary to the *Design* of the Eighth Commandment, and also forbidden in other places of the Holy Scripture. Another divulges whatever he has heard, or even suspects, to the Disadvantage of his Neighbour; although every such Report, if it be false, is a Breach of the Ninth Commandment; and although it should prove to be true, yet still may be contrary to that Love and Charity, which God has so often commanded us to practise towards all Men. Another revenges his Quarrel by a private Challenge to his Adversary, without any regard to the Sixth Commandment, or to any of those Texts of Scripture, which expressly forbid Revenge to be executed by any other Authority except that of the Magistrate. Another out of a plentiful Fortune, gives scarce any thing towards the Relief of the Poor; although no Duty is more often pressed and inculcated upon us by God, than that of Compassion and giving of Alms: And (to omit abundance of other Instances) not only Men, but Women also frequently go to Smutty Stage-Plays, and read or hearken to Books, Poems, and Songs, which (tho' under plausible Words, yet) contain a great deal of Obscenity in them; notwithstanding that (besides the strict *Purity in Heart* which the Gospel requires from us all)

they cannot be ignorant, that whatever has a *Tendency* towards Lewdness, is most certainly contrary to the *Design* of the Seventh Commandment. And if you ask any of these Persons, why they allow themselves in such sort of Liberties as are by no means indulged by the Laws of Christianity; they think it enough to say that these are the common Practices of the World: That they pass among Men without any severe Censure or Opinion of Scandal, and therefore they hope that either they are no Sins at all; or else such as will very easily be forgiven.

But if such Persons would seriously consider what that *Rule* is by which *alone* they are to be tried at the last great day of Account; it cannot be imagined but they would be more careful than now they are, to form all and every part of their Lives according to it. When we *all* come to *appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ*; the Question will not at all be, how well we have conformed our selves to the Opinions and Customs of the World; But *every one* of us (High and Low, Rich and Poor) must expect to *receive* his Reward or Punishment, *as the things done in his Body*, while he was here upon Earth, shall be found to be; and *according to that he hath done, whether it be Good or Bad*, so must he receive his Eternal Portion of Joy and Misery, 2 Cor. v. 10. And since the *Law of God is the only Rule of Good and Evil*; it follows, that nothing else will then be enquired into,

but

but I
able
vain
Judg
of w
much
Dea
few
Yea
Dea
appr
bring
nies
rally
of m
pass
and
has
who
incre
pass
versa
Scan
thing
base
of t
And
back
of Al
to d
reliev
Con
that

but how far our whole Lives have been agreeable to it. Or, because foolish Men are apt vainly to flatter themselves, that the *general Judgment* is very far off; let us take a View of what we are sure is very near, and perhaps much nearer than we imagine; I mean our *Death-bed*. When we come to have but a few Hours or Minutes (as now but a few Years or Days) to live in this World, and Death in all its Terror, is making its nearest approaches to us; what is it which then can bring us Comfort; or ease us from those Agonies and Afflictions, which at that time generally, we find, do strongly possess the Minds of most Men? A Man has all his Life long passed for a very accomplished Person, and according to the Modes of the World, has lived in great Credit among those whom they call *the better Sort*; he has increased his Fortune, lived gently, compassed his Designs, and defeated his Adversaries; and all this without any Publick Scandal or Blemish on his Reputation for any thing which *Men* commonly account to be base or dishonourable: But alas! *The fashion of this World passeth away* (1 Cor. vii. 31.) And now that he is just leaving it, and looks back upon it, he has a very different Notion of all its Trifles, from what he formerly used to deceive himself with; nor can any thing relieve him in this distressed Condition, if his Conscience does not bear Testimony to him, that his Life has been such as to render him a
 4 proper

proper Object of God's Mercy and Loving-kindness. In a word ; let Men shift and turn as much as they please, and seek for never so many vain Pretences ; there is nothing which can make a Death-bed easie, or give us the least Confidence or Hope of Reward or Acquittal before the Judgment-Seat of *Christ*, if we have not taken that Care which God requires from us, to lead our Lives according to his *Law* ; which is the only Rule he has given us to walk by, and for our Observation of which alone he will certainly call us to a strict and severe Account. Let us then in time consider this matter with that Seriousness which the Importance of it deserves, and while God is pleased to allow us yet some Days upon Earth, let us diligently set our selves both rightly to learn, and carefully to keep and observe the same *Law*, as the only supreme and indispensable Rule of our whole Lives ; to which all other subordinate Rules, however otherwise in themselves innocent, must for ever give place, whenever there arises any Competition between them : And let us again and again assure our selves of this great Truth, and always keep it in mind, That *no Custom or Fashion, no common Practice, or even Authority, in the whole World can render any thing innocent, or be a just Excuse for it, if it be found to be contrary unto any part of that Law* (rightly understood) *which God has given us as a constant Rule to walk by.* Much more might be said to press this Matter ; but indeed it is
in

in it
need
of it
B
am
men
seem
Sins
in th
pete
Hon
dit,
shar
do r
vanc
give
for t
steac
vera
has
requ
enjo
this
not
supp
care
ness,
and
of C
well
in P
com
were

in itself so very plain, that a reasonable Man needs no more but barely to be put in mind of it.

But before I dismiss the Persons of whom I am now speaking, I think I ought *expressly* to mention, and rank among them, all those who seem to make very little or no Account of the Sins of *bare Omission*. How many are there in the World to whom God has given a competent Proportion, greater or less, of Riches, Honour, Power, Wisdom, Learning, Credit, Interest; and to some, it may be, a good share of all; whereby they may be enabled to do much good of all kinds, and thereby advance the Honour and Glory of him who has given them all these Gifts and Endowments for that very end and purpose: And yet instead of being *active* and *laborious* in those several Works for which their Heavenly Lord has fitted them, and therefore most certainly requires from them; they often sit still and enjoy their ease, contenting themselves with this one Reflection, that they lead a Life tho' not very useful, yet in a good Degree (as they suppose) innocent; and as long as they are careful to obtain from Whoredom, Drunkenness, Oppression, Extortion, open Profaneness, and such like; which we commonly call *Sins of Commission*; they take their Case to stand well enough with God, altho' they seldom put in Practice the positive Duties which he has commanded; as if they thought there scarce were any such thing as a *Sin of Omission*; or
that

that the leaving of a good Work at any time undone, were a Matter of very small account before him.

After this manner it is evident that a great many do meerly *delude* and *impose* upon themselves: For if we consult the Holy Scriptures, nothing can be more plain, than that the Tenour and great *Design* of the whole System of God's Laws is directed and intended not only to keep us from doing those things which he has *forbidden*, but also to make us *diligent* and *industrious* in performing whatever he has thought fit to *command*. We must not only *cease to do Evil*, but *learn to do well*; (Isa. i. 16, 17.) Nor is it enough for the *Wicked Man* to *turn away from the Wickedness which he hath committed*, but he must also *do that which is lawful and right*, if he expects to *save his Soul alive*; (Ezek. xviii. 27.) And tho' we do not waste that *Talent* with which our Lord has entrusted us, in Riot and Luxury; yet if we suffer it to lie idle, and do not strive to make that use of it for which it was given us, we shall justly incur the Sentence that is pronounced against the *slothful* and *unprofitable Servant*; (Mat. xxv. 30.) Neither is it enough sometimes, or occasionally to do that which is good; but we must be *zealous of good Works*, if we would be of the Number of God's *peculiar People*; Tit. ii. 14. And if we are not only *stedfast* and *unmoveable*, but *always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, then,
and

and then only we may be assured that *our labour is not in vain in the Lord*; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

And thus I have done with the first sort of Men, to whom I intended to apply my Discourse; namely, those who venture to do or omit any thing, without sufficiently enquiring into the Lawfulness of such doing or omitting: I proceed now, in the

Second Place, to those who are more Scrupulous and Fearful than in all reason they ought to be.

That it is the duty of every Man to have a constant regard to the Law of God, in all and every part of his whole Life; is what no honest Man can deny. But some Persons there are of a Pious but Melancholy Temper, who are apt to imagine a great many things to be sinful, although it no way appears that this Law is transgressed by any of them. If they happen sometimes to eat a hearty Meal with a little better relish than usual, or drink a Glass or two more of Wine than what at other times they do, or speak a chearful or pleasant Word, or express themselves with a little Anger and Warmth, or beat down the price of a thing which they intend to buy, or forget themselves a little on the sudden when they are at their Devotions; on these, and many such Occasions, their Fancy suggests a thousand Fears to them, that they have transgress'd the Rules of Temperance, Modesty, Justice, or Piety, or some other Duty which they ought to have observed; the Consequence of which is often
great

great Trouble and Perplexity of Mind, which renders their whole Life very uneasy, and themselves no less doubtful of their Eternal Salvation.

Now the only certain and effectual way to get rid of all this Trouble, and restore the Minds of such Persons to Ease and Comfort, is for them to get full, clear and just Notions of the *Laws of God*, which if once they have, they will presently perceive how far any of the things which create all these Fears within them, are really *Sins*, and consequently to be repented of, and for the future avoided, or otherwise to raise no such dreadful Apprehensions within them. For example (and briefly to run over the instances just now given) all Rioting, Gluttony, Drunkenness, and Excess, or whatever of this sort either injures the Health, hurts the Reason, wastes the Time, destroys the Estate, or hinders either the relief of the Poor, or the performance of any other Christian Duty, is evidently contrary unto, and therefore forbidden by the true *Design*, if not the express Letter of God's Law, and therefore consequently a Sin: But since God has given not only the *Green Herb*, but also *every moving thing that liveth*, to be *Meat for us*; (*Gen. ix. 3.*) and even *Wine to make glad the Heart of Man*, as well as *Bread to strengthen it*; (*Psal. civ. 15.*) and has not only implanted in our very Nature both an Appetite to desire, and a Sense to be pleased with these his Blessings, but also expressly assured us, that

that
to be
(1 T
ful F
mitte
joine
7.) a
found
creat
Frien
our
voucl
Cana
suppl
ted it
Circu
berty
has g
done
or my
Scanc
ting n
as no
from
gave t
or me
Limit
tion o
course
upon
unto h
thing
of any
should

that every Creature of his is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with Thanksgiving; (1 Tim. iv. 4.) since also moderate and chearful Feasting is a thing that was not only permitted and frequently practised, but also enjoined by God unto his People, (Deut. xxvii. 7.) and, if not abused, is by long experience found to be an Excellent Instrument, for the creating as well as preserving of Love, and Friendship amongst Men; for which reason our Blessed Saviour himself did not only vouchsafe his presence at a Marriage-Feast in *Cana of Galilee*, but also wrought a Miracle to supply the Guests with Wine when they wanted it: (*John. ii. 1, &c.*) If according to my Circumstances I freely make use of this Liberty, which a Gracious and Merciful God has given me; and that without any wrong done to my Health, my Reason, my Family, or my Poor or Rich Neighbour, or giving any Scandal, or neglecting other Duties, or setting my Affection upon these Enjoyments, so as not to be willing to part with them, or from them, whenever the same Hand that gave them, shall think fit to take either them or me away: If under these sober and rational Limitations, I freely take pleasure in that portion of God's Creatures, which he in the course of his Providence thinks fit to bestow upon me (and that with Thankfulness always unto him that has given them) is there any thing in all this that is contrary to the *Design* of any of God's Laws? And if not, Why should I suffer any groundless Imagination to
D prevail

prevail in me, as if for this, and no more than this, I were to be reckon'd as a *sensual* Man, and not sufficiently *spiritually minded*? As melancholy Persons too often suffer themselves to be deluded by the bare sound of a Word or Expression, without a sufficient enquiry into the true and sober *Meaning* of it, or how far the thing intended by it, comes really and truly under the Rule of any Law of God.

In like manner, That all *foolish talking or jesting*, where the subject of it is *Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Covetouſneſs, Filthineſs*, or any Sin whatsoever, which ought not indeed, with any seeming Approbation, so much as to be *named* (Gal. v. 3, 4.) or even thought of by a Christian; that all such jesting as this (I say) is unlawful, will readily, I suppose, be granted: But since God has thought fit to make Laughter even natural to mankind, and a chearful Temper is known to contribute both to the Health of the Body and ease of the Mind; if the Subject of my Mirth be innocent, the time of it seasonable (as not hindering or interfering with any Duty) and the manner of it such as not to lessen or debase that sober Character, which, if maintained, may be a means of doing good in the World; what Law or Command of God do I break, if sometimes I unbend my Mind, and refresh myself with the diversion of a little pleasant Conversation, that thereby I may be the more fit with alacrity to return to whatever my Duty requires from me?

Again; that all causeless or over-violent
Anger

Ar
the
Bu
Sim
(E
tak
tho
inte
fore
use
rate
Evi
Rai
neve
is it
with
don
or t
with
Eve
Pass
who
part
Pow
who
pects
I
on t
it suf
ceive
neces
to do
kindl

Anger is a Sin (and more or less so as it exceeds the bounds of Reason) is not to be deny'd: But yet that it is possible to *be Angry and not Sin*, is most evidently supposed by St. Paul (*Eph. iv. 26.*) and therefore may at present be taken for granted: And Anger being one of those Passions which our All-wise Maker has interwoven with our very Frame, and therefore certainly has designed for some good use; if at the same time I so direct and moderate it, as to level it only against what is really Evil; and this without Bitterness, Clamour, Railing or Reviling; and always take care *never to let the Sun go down upon my Wrath*; is it to be imagined that God will be offended with me if I sometimes resent a Dishonour done to him, or an Injury to my Neighbour, or the Publick, or even to my self; and that with a little more than ordinary warmth? Every Man, no doubt, ought to govern his Passions, and keep them in due order; but wholly to extinguish or root out what is a part of our very Nature; as it is beyond our Power, so may we certainly conclude, that he who perfectly knows our Frame, neither expects nor requires it from us.

I will not with the same largeness insist upon the other two instances that remain: Let it suffice in a word to say, that altho' to deceive my Neighbour, or take advantage of his necessity in the making of a Bargain, would be to do to another what I should take very unkindly to be done to my self; and therefore

is unlawful by our blessed Saviour's own express Rule (*Mat. vii. 12.*) yet as I ought not to find fault with any Man for not giving me a greater price for my Goods, or not taking a less from me for his, than the common Market goes, or he can well afford; so (excepting now and then some extraordinary Cases of Charity and Compassion) is there no Law of God that requires me in such Cases as these to come to lower Terms with another than what I might reasonably desire that he should do by me, if I were in his Circumstances and he in mine. And lastly, altho' to address myself in Prayer to God, without a sincere *endeavour* to keep my mind attentive upon what I am about, is most evidently an affront to the Divine Majesty; yet since the Motions of *Thought* are not entirely in my Power; if, notwithstanding all my Care and Diligence, things foreign to the present Occasion do sometimes unavoidably crowd themselves into my Mind; yet since this is without the least concurrence of my *Will*; however it may be reckon'd as a natural Infirmary, against which I am bound to struggle as long as I live; yet will it never be put to the score of my *Sins*; since nothing that comes not within my Power, can ever be supposed to be *absolutely* forbidden or commanded by him who is infinitely both wise and gracious: Nor is it at all to be supposed, that such sort of wandering in Prayer, as we are now speaking of, was ever intended to be comprised under those Expressions

sions
God
the
from
Peri

In
or F
but
with
could
Fan
certa
haps
ther
and
Enq
Wh
bidd
And
any
the p
fage
inter
Lab
volv
befo
and
be
Con
No
unde
we
to pe

sions of the Prophet, of *drawing nigh unto God with the Mouth, and honouring him with the Lips, when yet the Heart is removed far from him;* (Isa. xxix. 13.) As some melancholy Persons are very apt to afflict themselves.

In a word, altho' there is scarce any Moral or Religious Action that some Men perform, but what is thus interspersed and perplexed with Doubts or Scruples; yet if such Persons could once be prevailed with, to lay aside mere *Fancy and Imagination*, which, being an uncertain Rule, must needs sometimes, and perhaps will very often misguide us; and instead thereof would always have recourse to sober and steady Reason, thereby to make this only Enquiry, *viz. What says the Law of God? What has he commanded? What has he forbidden? Or what in this Case is his Will?* And how does it appear to be so? Is it from any Moral Self-Evident Principle? Or from the plain Letter or Evident *Design* of any passage of his holy Word, rightly understood and interpreted? All these groundless Mazes and Labyrinths, wherein they often seem to be involved, would immediately vanish like Mists before the rising Sun; and the light of Reason and Holy Scripture once shining out, would be a sure and satisfactory Direction to their Conscience in all the Actions of their Lives: No Principles whatever being more clear and undoubted than these; *What God commands we are bound, to the very best of our Power, to perform; what he forbids, we are, in like manner,*

D 3

manner, bound to forbear ; and where he neither expressly, nor by consequence, commands or forbids any thing, we are left to our own choice and Prudence ; neither have we any other Faculty, but that of our Reason, whereby to apprehend or rightly to interpret, all or any of his Commands or Prohibitions.

But some will say, that, notwithstanding all this, yet Experience assures us that in melancholy Persons, *Imagination* will hardly, if at all, be wholly overcome by the clearest Reasons : And if after all that is or can be done for the clearing up a Case of Conscience, some doubt yet remains upon the Mind, and will not be driven away, even by the most rational Arguments ; what may or must be done in such a Case ? Or can it be lawful for a Man to do any thing of which such a doubt yet remains ; (*Rom. xiv. 23.*) and consequently whereof he is not fully persuaded in his own Mind ? (*v. 5.*) To this I answer :

First, that it is by all Men allowed, that whenever a Doubt arises in the Mind, concerning the Lawfulness of any Action ; against such a Doubt no Man ought to proceed to act, until such time as he has made the best enquiry he can, whether there be any reasonable Ground or Foundation for such a Doubt or not.

Secondly, If after such a full Enquiry, no such Ground or Foundation for the Doubt appears, it is to be presumed that there is none for it, and consequently that it is only the effect of bare *Fancy* or *Imagination*. For the Law

Law of God (upon which alone all such Doubts ought ever to be grounded) is sufficiently clear to every sober Enquirer who uses all proper helps to understand it : And if after such an Enquiry made, no sufficient ground for the Doubt appears ; it is justly to be presumed that there is none.

Thirdly, If from the Law of God, rightly interpreted, it appears that there is a *reasonable ground* for such a Doubt, it then ceases to be any longer a *Doubt*, and becomes a certain *Rule of Action*, not with a good Conscience to be transgressed, because *reasonably grounded on the Law of God*.

But, Fourthly, If after a diligent enquiry, no such ground or foundation for a *Doubt* appears, and therefore is supposed not to be ; the *Doubt* itself is to be rejected as a bare *Scruple* (which is nothing else but a *groundless Doubt*) and that because it has no reasonable ground or foundation. And whereas God has given us *his Law*, as a Rule altogether befitting rational Creatures, to be the only supreme and indispensable direction of the whole course of our Lives and Actions ; If in any Action of ours, that properly comes under the Regulation of this same Law, we suffer our selves to be guided by groundless Doubts or Scruples, or any thing else but that very Law which God has appointed for our Rule ; we so far in effect forsake that Rule which God himself has prescribed to us, and substitute another in the stead thereof, which neither sober Reason,

son, nor the Holy Scriptures, nor any thing else, except our own deluded Fancy, or it may be Satan, or some of his Emiffaries, as a trap or snare, suggests unto us.

But Scruples, like other light things, are commonly restless, and never leave seeking for every pretence that may help to support and keep them in motion; and amongst other mistaken Notions and Texts of Holy Scripture, no small stress is by some laid upon those Words of St. Paul, 1 Theff. v. 22. *Abstain from all appearance of Evil*: From whence some fanciful Men would infer, that altho' an Action has nothing *really Evil*, or contrary to God's Law in it; yet if it has but a bare *appearance* of Sinfulness, it is wholly to be avoided, and never to be ventured upon by any one who would always maintain a pure and upright Conscience; and because this single Text is often the occasion of no small perplexity to weak and scrupulous Consciences, I shall conclude this Head of my Application, together with my whole Discourse, with briefly setting it in its clear and true Light.

By an *appearance of Evil*, then, we may possibly understand either something that is both *really Evil*, and also *appears so to be*; or else what is not *it self Evil*; but is only *thought so*, and that either by a *Man's own self*, or by *others*.

First then, if any thing *is really Evil, and also appears so to be*: From such a thing it is allowed

allow
wholly

See
evil,
I am
as long
am be
it, as
done
just no
at any
cion o
or Co
tion o
that n

Th
and I
thers
so far
offenc
to him
can pe
Propo
Text
run in
abstain
offend
solutel
But th
The f
mands
indiffer
of suc

allowed on all Hands that every Man ought *wholly to abstain*.

Secondly, If a thing appears *to me* to be evil, and I am persuaded that it is so; altho' I am altogether mistaken in my opinion, yet as long as I continue under such a persuasion, I am bound in the same manner to abstain from it, as if it were really evil. What is to be done in the case of *Doubts* or *Scruples*, I have just now shewn. But altho' the Conscience is at any time Erroneous, yet if it has no suspicion of the Error, but is under a full *Persuasion* or *Conviction* of Mind; against such a *Conviction* or *Persuasion*, it is allowed by all Casuists that no Man ought at any time to act.

Thirdly, Altho' a thing be really lawful, and I am fully persuaded that so it is; yet if others do believe it to be evil and sinful; I am so far bound to abstain from it, as not to give offence to my weak Brother, or be any way unto him an occasion of Sinning: I mean, if I can possibly avoid it, (1 Cor. x. 13). This Proposition is true, but not contained in the Text we now are upon: The Words do not run in a relative manner; nor is it *here* said abstain from the appearance of evil in Case it offends thy Brother; but [positively and absolutely] *abstain from all appearance of Evil*. But there are two things here to be noted: The first is, that if *lawful Authority* commands a thing, that is *lawful*, tho' otherwise *indifferent*, that thing during the continuance of such Command, becomes a *Duty*: And
tho'

tho' to other Men it may have an *appearance of Evil*; yet their Mistake, or the offence which they take at it, is no sufficient Warrant for me to neglect or omit it. For otherwise it will be in the Power of a few Men, not only by their *real* but *pretended Mistakes* (which none but God can distinguish the one from the other) at their pleasure to controul or disannul all the Sanctions of any human Power whatsoever, so far at least as that they ought to have no influence upon the Consciences even of those Men who judge them in themselves to be lawful. The other thing to be noted is, that tho' to avoid giving offence (or *scandal* as we commonly term it) we may be often bound to abstain even from such actions as are otherwise altogether indifferent: Yet at the same time we are bound to maintain the *lawfulness* of such Actions, I mean if we ourselves are so persuaded of them. For if, without any opposition, we suffer any thing to be generally reputed either a Sin or a Duty, which really and truly is not so; we do not *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*; (Gal. v. 1.) we at least permit the *Commandments* [Precepts or Injunctions] of Men to be taught for [Divine] *Doctrines*; (Mat. xv. 9.) and give way to the making of *Additions* even unto the Laws of God. (Deut. iv. 2.) For as he, who asserts a thing to be a *Duty* which really is not so, adds (as much as in him lyes) an *affirmative Precept* to God's Law; so he, that maintains any thing to be a *Sin* which

which
makes
But to

Fou
lawful,
no mis
soever
gation
stain fr
dal, b
Scriptu
yet the
ficient
bear g
this on
can be
lawful
throug
ful? A
in poin
differen
all ?) th
less, b
tinual p
us, tha
even c
change
and for
scure or
themse
know,
what a
that M

which at most is but *an indifferent Action*, makes the like addition of a *negative Precept*. But to return from this Digression.

Fourthly and lastly ; if a thing be itself lawful, and I am fully persuaded that it is so ; no mistakes of other Men (who or how many soever they are) about it, can lay any Obligation upon my Conscience to forbear or abstain from it ; except only in the Case of *Scandal*, but just now mentioned. If the Holy Scriptures were silent touching this particular, yet the Law of Reason and Charity would sufficiently oblige us as much as possible to forbear giving Offence to any Man. But setting this one Case aside, what imaginable Reason can be given why one Man should forbear a *lawful Action* only because some others, through mistake, apprehend it to be *unlawful* ? And if other Mens *bare Opinions* must in point of Conscience be a Rule to all my indifferent Actions (for if to some, why not to all ?) this is not only a thing altogether groundless, but must unavoidably engage me in continual perplexity : For since experience assures us, that sometimes Men are of different, and even contrary Opinions ; sometimes they change their Opinions, it may be backwards and forwards, and sometimes they are so obscure or undetermined, that it is not easy for themselves, and much less for another, to know, in some Cases, what their Opinion is ; what a dark and inextricable Labyrinth must that Man needs be engaged and entangled in,
 who

who thinks himself obliged, in all the common or indifferent Actions of his Life, to be guided by so uncertain, and even inconsistent a Rule, as this most evidently appears to be ?

I know that many Imaginations do often arise in the Minds of some melancholy People, which are very *uneasy*, and no small *hindrance* sometimes to them in the performance of what they *know* or *believe* to be their Duty : But with these it was not my Design in this Discourse to meddle, but only to shew what proper Method is to be taken for the removing of Scruples, and every thing whatsoever that at any time makes us *doubtful what our Duty is, or how far we are left to our own Liberty in point of Conscience.*

F I N I S.

The

L

Occa

*M E
the
sha
tak*

D

Lord

Yea, an

Printed

The true Nature of an
OATH.

A

LETTER

TO A SOBER

QUAKER.

Occasioned by the ACT of PARLIAMENT: Whereby it is Enacted that the *Solemn Affirmation* of a QUAKER shall be of like Force with an OATH taken in the common Form of LAW.

By the Most Reverend
Dr. EDWARD SYNGE,
Lord Archbishop of Tuam in Ireland.

LUKE xii. 57.

Yea, and why even of your selves judge ye not what is right.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Richard Williamson, near Gray's-Inn-Gate, in Holbourn. MDCCXXXVI.

(Price 1 d.)

The

My

W

and you
a Man
your P
but th
you se
Ways.
your c
Matter
Proper
hood o
depend

By

maton

of the

I desire

you to

solemn

be not

that w

Law;

or can

think i

veral v

Confid

Occasioned by the Act of Parliament
in 1791 whereby it is enacted that
the 20th Amendment of the Statute
shall be of like Force with an OATH
taken in the common Form of Law.

By the Most Reverend

DR. EDWARD STANGE

Lord Archbishop of Tuam in Ireland

and my ears of your (sic) judge, so not what
is right.

LONDON

Printed by Robert Wilson, near Grafton
Lane, in Pall-mall, MDCCLXXVI

(Price 1s.)

The True Nature of AN OATH, &c.

My Good Neighbour,

WHATEVER your Errors in Religion are or may be, (for which you must answer to God and your own Conscience) I take you to be a Man of as good Understanding as any of your Profession; and have no reason to think but that you are a sincere Man, and that you seriously make a Conscience of all your Ways. For which Reason I desire to know your clear and plain Thoughts concerning a Matter of great Importance, upon which the Property, and, it may be, the whole Livelyhood of many an honest Man does, or may depend.

By Act of Parliament, The *solemn Affirmation* of a Quaker is, in many Cases, to be of the same Force in Law with *an Oath*. Now I desire to know your Opinion, (and I pray you to give it fully and freely) whether this *solemn Affirmation*, as it is worded in the Act, be not really and truly as much *an Oath* as that which is taken in the common Form of Law; and indeed as any other *Oath* that is or can be prescribed or taken? For my part, I think it is; and for my Opinion I have several very material Things to offer to your Consideration.

A 2

A Quaker

A *Quaker* is produced as a Witness in a Court of Justice, where his Neighbour's Property is to be tryed. Instead of *an Oath* in the common Form of Law, *he* is to give his Testimony thus, "*I do solemnly, sincerely, and truly Declare and Affirm* that the Evidence which I shall give in this Cause shall be the Truth, &c." Now this I say is in reality *an Oath*, to all Intents and Purposes.

In the *Holy Scriptures* (which both you and I own as the Rule of our Faith and Manners) we often meet with mention made of *an Oath*, and several Forms wherein it used to be taken. But if the Question be put *What is an Oath?* And *wherein does the Nature of it consist?* To this the *Scriptures* give us no Answer; nor was there any Necessity for it; because all Men, of whatever different Opinions in Religion, have always universally agreed in one and the same *Notion* of *an Oath*. Let us then see what this *Notion* is, and by it form our Opinion of the *solemn Affirmation* of a *Quaker*.

"When a Man affirms or promises any thing, and so *expresses* his Meaning as manifestly to signify that, *at that Time, and upon that Occasion*, he has GOD in his Thoughts, and looks upon himself to be lyable to His Justice and Punishment, in Case that he prevaricates or speaks *falsely*;" such a Man is look'd upon to have *taken an Oath* that he speaks Truth, or will perform what he promises. If you have
any

any
and
only
have
cept
are
a H
great
Man
nifica
Relig
Yo
of Ju
cerely
desire
I am
scien
with
Wha
speak
Mean
" be
" TH
" for
" de
" is
" kn
" and
" De
" He
" ly
" ly
" case

any other *Notion* of an *Oath*; speak plain, and say what it is: But this is the proper and only one that all Men ever have had and still have of it. I know not whether I may except the *Quakers*; some of whose *Notions* are manifestly very whimsical. *Tully*, tho' a Heathen, was a very learned Man and a great Moralist. He spoke the Sense of all Mankind, when he gave this short but significant Definition of an *Oath*, that it is a *Religious Affirmation*.

You are produced as a Witness in a Court of Justice. You there say, *I do solemnly, sincerely, and truly Declare and Affirm, &c.* I desire to know what you *mean* by these Words. I am sure that a Man of your Sense and Conscience will not speak them like a *Parrot*, without affixing any Signification to them. What then do you *mean* by them? I will speak for you, and venture to say that *your Meaning* would be this. “*The Powers that*
 “*be are ordained of God: Rom. xiii. 1.*
 “*Therefore the Magistrate or Officer, before whom I stand, acts by an Authority*
 “*derived from GOD; and GOD who*
 “*is the Searcher of all Hearts, perfectly*
 “*knows whether I now speak with Truth*
 “*and Sincerity: And if after such a solemn*
 “*Declaration, I should falsify or prevaricate,*
 “*He most certainly would thereby be highly*
 “*offended; and except I should sincerely*
 “*repent and make full Restitution, in*
 “*case I should hereby knowingly do wrong*
 “ 10

“ to any Man; He, Who is infinitely Just
 “ and Righteous, would most certainly
 “ punish me, not only for the Wrong done
 “ to my Neighbour, but also for the Viola-
 “ tion of my *solemn Declaration*.”

This, I say, would undoubtedly be *yours*
 and every *sober Quaker's Meaning* in such a
 Case as this: Or else speak plainly and say
 what your *Meaning* would be. For some-
 thing sure ought to be *meant* by such strong
 and remarkable Words as these; *Solemnly*,
Sincerely, and *Truly*.

If then this be really and truly your *Mean-
 ing*; either your *solemn Declaration* is to all
 Intents and Purposes *an Oath*, or you must
 be able to shew me something else that is,
 or indeed can be *meant* by *an Oath*.

When the *Quakers* were soliciting for
 this *Act*; it was, amongst other Things in
 private Conversation, proposed to some of
 the Principal of them that their *Declaration*
 should be established in this Form, *I Declare
 upon my Conscience that, &c.* But this they
 unanimously rejected as being *an Oath*, and
 strenuously insisted upon the Words of our
 Blessed Saviour, Mat. v. 34. *I say unto
 you, Swear not at all. But let your Commu-
 nication be yea, yea; nay, nay: For what-
 soever is more than these cometh of evil.* I
 beseech you then to shew me the Difference
 between a man's saying *I do Solemnly, Sincere-
 ly, and Truly Declare and Affirm*, and his
 saying *I declare upon my Conscience*. If then
 the

the *Sense* and *Meaning* of both these Forms of Expression be exactly the same ; certainly if one of them be an *Oath*, the other must also be so. And if *Whatsoever is more than yea, yea, nay, nay, cometh of Evil*, in your Sense of that Expression; it must be so to say *I do Solemnly, Sincerely, and Truly Declare and Affirm*, which has more (indeed much more) in it than answering *yea* or *nay* to a common Question that is asked.

No doubt a good Christian ought to have God very often in his Thoughts; and the Sense of His infinite Knowledge and Justice ought to be a constant Restraint upon us all, to keep us from every thing that is sinful; and particularly from telling Lyes even in our ordinary Conversation. But when a Man so *expresses* himself, as manifestly to signify that, *at that time and upon that Occasion*, he has God in his Remembrance (which is plainly the case of every Man who says *I do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm*) he *appeals to God*, as expecting to be called to account and punished by him for his Prevarication, in case he be guilty of it; which is what all Men have ever meant and do mean by an *Oath*.

Conscience is a great (I think the greatest) Support and Security to *civil Justice*; of which the *civil Legislature* is every where, upon Earth, the supreme Guardian. Our *Legislature* therefore having inserted such strong words in the *Declaration* to be made

made by Quakers; I must suppose that they did it with a Design to awaken *Conscience* in them; and that what *they* meant by these words is the very same as if they had enacted that a Quaker should declare *upon his Conscience*; which you (and I believe all Men) will allow to be *an Oath*. And certainly a Quaker ought to mean the same Thing by his *Declaration*, as is manifestly intended by the Law which prescribes it.

○ If then you are a Man of *Conscience* (as really I take you to be) this *Solemn Declaration* of yours must be lookt upon to be *an Oath*, altho' not taken in the common Form. *Forms* may be varied, and yet the *Intent* and *Design* (by which alone we are here to judge) may still be the same. Whatever the Words or Expressions may be; yet the *Solemn, Sincere, and True Declaration*, of an honest and upright Man, is always *an Appeal to GOD and his own Conscience*, which is *an Oath*, or else I beseech (I may say I challenge) you to tell me what *an Oath* is.



I am

Your Sincere Well-wisher.

FINIS.

